

# GROUND AND NORM OF MORALITY

ETHICS FOR  
COLLEGE  
STUDENTS

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1989

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Ateneo de Manila University Press

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## Preface

This book is a college textbook in general ethics. It is not meant only for those who are philosophy majors. Technical philosophical terms are not used, except those that a college student might be expected to know from one or two other basic college philosophy courses usually required of him, such as the course on philosophy of man. On the other hand, effort is exerted to present the subject matter honestly in all its difficulty, avoiding the temptation of simplifying or watering down things to a point where they no longer show themselves for what they truly are.

The book concentrates on the general principles of ethics. There is a second volume still in preparation intended to discuss applied ethics, or the application of the general principles to concrete human life.

After the introductory preliminary notions, there is a historical retrospective composed of seven chapters—Buddha, Confucius, Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Kant, Utilitarianism. In effect, the introduction ends showing how the traditional morality received from the past leads to the necessity of moral reflection or moral philosophy. Hence, the historical retrospective shows how the moral thinkers of the past, encountering moral problems in their own times, were led to go back and reflect on their moral traditions. This historical part is important to make the student aware that there had been many others long before we were born who posed moral questions and eventually proposed moral theories or philosophies that continue to influence our present tradition of moral thought and action. Indeed, there are moral philosophy or ethics courses which consist mainly of a history of moral philosophy, consi-

dering each of the major moral theories of the past, showing how they respectively tackled moral questions. This approach has been shown to be quite effective in stimulating critical thought and discussion. However, especially for an undergraduate course, beyond a historical study, there would seem to be need of a systematic grasp and a general framework in the end. Having gone through a historical retrospective, it is natural that the student should ask—what then is one to think of all that? What finally is the good? What ought man to do? What in the end is the origin and source of moral obligation? Leaving these questions in suspense, the purely historical approach tends to make moral philosophy a mere series of worldviews and vignettes without any final meaning or reason.

Hence, after seeing how past moral thinkers grappling with problems brought up by their times were led to rethink their moral traditions and eventually to come up with their moral theory or philosophy, we must now proceed to do moral theory ourselves. This theoretical part is composed of five chapters. First there is a description of the moral dimension, in effect, an attempt at a phenomenological description of the moral dimension of man. Then follows the chapter showing how conscience is the ground and norm of morality from which everything else flows. Subsequently, it is shown how proceeding from conscience the personal nature of man and thereafter the Natural Law may be considered too as norm of morality. Conscience, personal nature of man, Natural Law are presented to be aspects of one and the same thing. Furthermore, these three chapters on the ground and norm of morality show that we must eventually consider these principles in their historical context as the concrete historical nature of man demands.

Closing the theoretical part is a chapter regarding the question of the ultimate ground of morality. And finally, there is a chapter on a general method of determining the morality of an action, where the norm of morality applied to the structure of human action is shown to entail the four moral determinants of human action.

Some teachers might find it pedagogically more effective to go immediately after the preliminary notions to the chapter on the description of moral dimension. Hence, before launching into the historical part, we try to get a clearer grasp of what moral experience essentially means. Subsequently we tackle the historical part, which shows how each past moral theory tries to explain each of the five essential characteristics of moral experience. Then, before proceeding to the theoretical part, the description of moral experience is once more reviewed in prepa-

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ration for the study of the chapters on ground and norm of morality—conscience, personal nature of man, and the Natural Law.

After more than two decades of teaching the subject, I have finally yielded to my students' requests to put my teaching notes in print. In a sense all my Ph104 students have had a part in the making of this text through the years by their questions, comments, and discussions inside and outside the classroom. To them I dedicate this book in friendship and in gratitude.

This book was written during the schoolyear 1987-88, when I was on sabbatical leave from the Ateneo de Manila School of Arts and Sciences and holder of the H.V. De La Costa Professorial Chair.

I would like to thank all those who thoughtfully sent in their reactions and comments before full publication of this book. Most especially I would like to express my gratitude to Fr. Joseph A. Galdon, S.J., who kindly accepted to go over the text for corrections in language and style. Finally, I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to Dr. Pablo Manalastas, whose technical help was invaluable in the transfer of the text from the word processor to the editing facilities of the publisher.

R. C. R.

## Introduction

# Preliminary Notions

ETYMOLOGICALLY, THE WORD "ETHICS" comes from the Greek word *ethos* meaning customs, usage, character. The Roman language and culture, which inherited the Greek culture, expressed the same concept in the word *mores*, which in turn is the root of the words "morality," "moral," and "morals." We see then that "ethics" and "morals" are ordinarily used as equivalent terms. In general, they mean the traditional manners, customs, habits, or character of a community or group, which pertain to the group's standards or norms, or what is sometimes called the group's "system of values" which determines what is considered "good," "right," or the "proper" way of living, of acting, of doing.

### Norms of Morality

Such a broad concept, however, needs further precision for we see immediately that there are various meanings of the expression "what is proper," or "what is good and right." Hence we talk sometimes of the "right man for the job," or "the proper political action to take," or "good manners at table," or "a good and just man." What this means is that, within the broad *ethos* or *mores* of a community, there are several different standards to be found.

Upon closer analysis, we can distinguish at least four types of norms or standards within the *ethos* or *mores* of a community. First, there is what may be called the technical norm. This refers mainly to man's needs which come from his bodily space-time limitations. This norm has to do with survival, health and well-being. It is concerned with problems of effect-

ing change, of transforming the natural world, the problems of coping with natural forces, both within and without the human organism. Thus, the technical norm is concerned with the techniques of relating means to ends and the techniques of healing and health, of work, production, and organization. Therefore, because of its survival and well-being, every community prescribes certain proper ways of working and doing things. For example, there are the "right" things to eat, the "accepted" way of performing an appendectomy, the "right" way of preparing the field for planting rice, the "correct" way of constructing the roof of a house, the "established" way of dividing the work so that certain things are done by men, others by women. Because of this technical norm certain community members are considered "good," meaning good workers, industrious, efficient and productive. Others are considered lazy, good-for-nothing, inefficient.

Second, there is what might be called the societal norm. This has to do with the need for group cohesion and for strengthening the bonds that keep the community together. In relation to this norm, for example, certain manners or attire, certain ways of speaking or of conducting oneself, certain rituals and ceremonies, are considered "proper and fitting," "appropriate," or "recommended," because they maintain and strengthen the bonds that keep the community together. Other ways of behavior are proscribed or frowned upon because they are unmindful of or destructive of social relations.

Third is the aesthetic norm. This refers to typical perceptual forms, regarding color, shape, space, movement, sound, feeling and emotion, touch and texture, taste, scent and odor, both in the natural and in the man-made environment, which are considered by the community as "ennobling," "cathartic," "heightening man's existence," or "beautiful," because they represent a certain free play and celebration of the human spirit.

\* Fourth is the ethical or moral norm in the narrower or stricter sense. In the life of the community, the ethical or moral norm combines with religion to form what is sometimes referred to as the "ethico-religious" norm. (We will see later how we can differentiate more precisely the ethical or moral from the other aspects of life.) The moral norm refers to some ideal vision of man, an ideal stage or perfection of man, which serves as the ultimate goal and norm. In relation to moral norm man and his actions are judged to be right or wrong, good or bad. Because of this ideal vision of man, a community has what is sometimes called the "nonnegotiables," those things which the community

cherishes and considers of ultimate worth, which give ultimate sense and direction to human existence. Therefore, all the other norms—technical, societal, aesthetic—are to be subordinated to this moral norm.

### **Definition of Morality**

In a narrower and stricter sense, therefore, ethics or morality refers to that dimension of human existence whereby man confronts or finds himself, an ideal vision of man, or an ideal state and goal of his existence which he finds himself oriented toward. The ideal vision thus constitutes for him an exigency, a demand to action in accord with the ideal vision and goal. By the same token, this ideal vision of man constitutes a fundamental norm in relation to which his life and actions are judged to be either right or wrong, good or bad. Right and wrong mean literally being straight or not, in line with, in conformity or not, with the norm. Good and bad are often used as equivalents of right and wrong. However, in more precise language, right and wrong refer specifically to that which is morally binding or obligatory. Thus, the right action is that which we ought to do or ought to have done, the wrong action that which we ought to refrain from or ought to have refrained from doing. On the other hand, good and bad have the connotation of that which is in conformity or not with the goal. Therefore, good and bad signify fulfillment, completion, perfection or not. Some moral theories are considered to be "deontological," because they put more stress on the aspect of moral duty and obligation. Other theories are "teleological" (*telos*—end, fulfillment, realization), because they put more emphasis on morality as the attainment of man's end, fulfillment and happiness.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Concept of Value**

Related to the concepts of "ethics," "morality," "good and bad," "right and wrong," is the concept of more recent usage, that of "value." "Value," in general, means what an individual or a group deems to be useful, desirable, or significant. The concept of the "good" has an ontological bias toward that which is objectively the goal or fulfillment of the being of man, and the "right" has the connotation of moral obligation or duty which imposes itself on man. But "value," which is of more recent origin stresses the relation to some aspect of the human

subjectivity. Value is that which corresponds to some need, desire or yearning of the human subject. Insofar as a thing responds to a human need, desire or yearning, it is a value, or is of value. Value, however, is sometimes used to refer to the qualities of a thing which make it actually desirable by man or which should make it intrinsically desirable to him because it answers a human need, desire or yearning. Like the various norms and levels of meaning of goodness and propriety within the broad concept of *ethos* or *mores* we saw above, "value" also may be differentiated into various senses or levels (material value, societal value, aesthetic value, moral value) corresponding to the different needs and yearnings of man. Sometimes value means what the human individual actually desires. At other times, it refers to what a group desires and thus prescribes for the individual member as something to be desired. Finally, particularly when applied to moral value, value means what is intrinsically desirable, and thus what should be desirable for all men and all groups.

The concepts of *ethos* and *mores* indicate that the ethical or moral dimension of human existence is something which man is initiated into by the life and tradition of the community. Born into and raised within the milieu of communal life, the individual human being imbibes the culture of his community in all its aspects—technical, societal, aesthetic, ethico-religious. As he grows up within the community, he is trained in basic skills and eventually prepared for an occupation or profession. He is taught within the family and thereafter through other groups and institutions—peers, school, private associations, work group—the societal rules and manners of the community. From his natural and social environment, he assimilates the aesthetic forms, tastes, and style of the community. Throughout his life, he imbibes the moral and religious traditions and practices of the community.

We see, therefore, that ethics or morality does not begin as an idea or theory of a moral philosopher. Ethics or morality is essentially a dimension of man's existence as a socio-historical being. We will see later whether the fact that ethical or moral experience is something man awakens to as a socio-historical being is reason enough to conclude, as some do, that ethics or morality is therefore reducible to purely social and historical factors. For the moment, let us simply note that man is first initiated into moral experience and life by the community. Moral experience and life are part of the culture handed down (*trado, tradere*—to hand over, thus trade, tradition) to man by society and history.

## Moral Reflection

This traditional moral life and experience, however, which we inherit as part of our communal culture, soon leads to something which brings about its transformation, namely, moral reflection or moral philosophy. There are several factors which lead to this transformation.

① First, the process of psychological maturation eventually involves the appropriation, the "making our own," the moral tradition that we inherit. As we grow to adulthood, we ask questions about the moral principles and practices that we were taught, if only to comprehend them and make them our own. By this process, what initially were merely traditional ways and external moral precepts and impositions, become internalized, and become moral convictions and reflected positions. Psychologists like Kohlberg have made interesting studies showing the psychological transformation of the moral perspective as the individual normally develops into adulthood.<sup>2</sup>

② Second, the very nature of ethical or moral experience leads to moral reflection. Moral experience, as we shall see later, essentially signifies some kind of an absolute demand or obligation, addressed to the human individual as a human person, as an "I," as a being of intellect and will, who reflects and acts on his own account. Hence, inherent to morality is the imperative of action. The imperative of action means basically an initiative, a movement originating from the human individual himself. It is something that is his own and done on his own responsibility, something he understands and willfully posits. Therefore it implies some reflection and freedom.

③ Third, in its history, the community eventually encounters other cultures and thus, other moral or ethical traditions. This encounter with other moral traditions inevitably leads one's own moral tradition to question itself in relation to the other traditions. Which one is the right one? Is there a set of elements common to all the moral traditions? Is morality purely relative to the community that one belongs to?

In brief, the ethical or moral tradition that we inherit naturally leads to a moment of moral reflection or moral philosophy. The moral tradition that we inherit cannot remain for long as purely "traditional," or merely "what our elders have taught us." In order for us to remain faithful to this ethical or moral tradition that we inherit, we soon find ourselves necessarily reflecting upon it, deepening our grasp of it, and taking seriously its profound meaning and implications for our existence. In this sense, we may say that the ethical or moral

tradition that we inherit is of itself not sufficient. Traditional morality of its nature gives rise to the existential necessity of moral reflection or moral philosophy.

### Study Guide Questions

1. Explain the etymology of the terms "ethics" and "morals."
2. What are the different types of norms included in the general concept of *ethos* or *mores*? Define each of them and differentiate each from the others.
3. How may we define the ethical or moral norm at this stage of our study?
4. Explain the concept of value. How is the concept of value related to that of morality or ethics?
5. What is the difference in meaning between the correlatives good/bad and right/wrong?
6. What is the difference between a "teleological" and a "deontological" moral theory?
7. Explain how communal life is man's initiation into moral life.
8. What is traditional morality?
9. Explain why there is an existential necessity for reflection regarding the moral tradition and hence a need for moral philosophy.
10. What are some of the factors which lead to questioning at least some aspects of the traditional morality?

### Suggested Assignment

Make a list of Filipino cultural institutions and practices such as *bayanihan*, *pamamanhikan*, *harana*, *misa de gallo* and the like. Describe each one of them and explain what type of norm it belongs to. Keep in mind that cultural institutions and values may belong to several types of norms at the same time.

# Chapter One

## The Moral Teaching of Siddhartha Gautama (563-483 B.C.)

### Past Moral Theories

BEFORE WE DO moral reflection or moral philosophy ourselves, reflecting on the moral tradition that the past has endowed us with, it would be good if we first look at past moral theories, at least the few major ones. These past moral theories represent the reflections of those who have grappled with the same basic moral questions that we shall have to face. We are not the first to pose questions regarding traditional morality. All these past moral theories represent the thoughts of thinkers who in their own time took up the task of reappropriating their moral tradition and facing the moral questions of their time.

Furthermore, these past moral theories or reflections have not remained free-floating, as it were, divorced from moral life and practice. To the extent that these past reflections have succeeded in bringing light and understanding to the moral dimension of man, they have historically transformed man's perception of moral experience and his manner of living up to it. They have become part and parcel of our own moral life and tradition today. Thus, it will be seen that what we call "moral tradition" is really a compenetration of institutionalized theory and practice, institutionalized thought and action, which is further maintained only by a continuing rhythm of reflective reappropriation and diligent reliving.

We, therefore, need to go through at least a brief review of these past moral theories before we embark on moral reflection for ourselves.

By the sixth century B.C., Hinduism, which had originated with the *Vedas* and the *Brahmanas*, had developed into a cumbersome religion of transmigration, castes and sacrificial

rituals. Existence was seen as an endless cycle of birth and rebirth. Man's state in life was explained as caused by deeds from a previous existence. Deliverance from the cycle of re-incarnations could be attained only through formal rituals performed by the Brahman priests.

Reforms and reactions to Hinduism were bound to arise. Within the tradition itself of the *Vedas* and the *Brahmanas*, the *Upanishads* emerged. They taught deliverance not through formal sacrifices and rituals but by way of union with the one divine essence. All the world is Brahman which is the one Godhead manifesting itself in various forms. God is all and all is God. The human soul (*atman*) is, therefore, divine and of the same nature as Brahman. It is when the human awakens to the immanence of this ultimate divine principle that deliverance comes.

Buddhism may be considered as another reform movement or reaction against the state of Hindu doctrine and practices at the time. Today Buddhism is regarded as one of the great world religions. However, it began originally as a pure ethic which rejected the authority of the *Vedas* and the *Brahmanas*, and established a way to human liberation and salvation solely through human effort and discipline which refused any supernatural revelation or intervention.

There are no certain dates regarding the life of Buddha, the founder of Buddhism. One position holds that he lived from 563 to 483 B.C. Another reckoning places him from 624-544 B.C. The Chinese Buddhist tradition considers that he lived sometime around 1,000 B.C. Documents on his life were written at least several centuries after his death. Fact and legend were mixed together by the traditional community which transmitted the accounts on his life.

He was named Siddhartha. His family name was Gautama. He was born to the warrior caste. He was from the clan of the Shakyas, whose capital was Kapilavastu, in north central India in the region which is now Nepal. Later on, he was to be known as the *Shakya-muni*, the "Sage of the Shakyas."

He married a beautiful princess who bore him a son. However, at age 29, he encountered four significant things in a drive through Lumbini Park. He saw an old man, a sick man, a corpse, and an ascetic monk. Siddhartha came to the realization of universal suffering in this world and of the emptiness of all life. Forthwith, he renounced his princely life, shaved off his hair, and took on the life of an ascetic seeking the way of deliverance.

Abolition

His search lasted about six years. He sought instruction under two religious masters. Unsatisfied, he went on his own to the forest where he underwent a regime of extreme mortification. Still not attaining any peace or deliverance, he continued his search. He moved on to the town of Gaya, a Hindu sanctuary on a tributary of the Ganges. Just outside the town, he sat under a Bo-tree (also known as pipal tree or Indian fig tree) and resolved not to move from there until he had attained light and understanding.

After a day and a night of meditation, he experienced the enlightenment he had long searched for. He perceived the origin of all pain and suffering in the world. Hence, he became Buddha, the "awakened one" or "enlightened one." He attained Nirvana, the "blowing out" or extirpation of all desire and the liberation from the cycle of transmigration. He was then thirty-five years old.

He proceeded to Benares, an important Hindu religious center and there he preached his first sermon, the famous "Turning the Wheel of Doctrine." With this first sermon he gained his first five disciples.

For forty-five years thereafter, Buddha went about teaching. With the increase of converts, who were known as arahats or "worthy ones," he formed a community of monks or Sangha. Later, an order of nuns was also established. It is said that Buddha's son eventually joined the community of monks and his wife the order of nuns.

Buddha died when he was eighty years old on his way to Kushinara. As he was dying, Ananda, his primary disciple, asked Buddha what they should do after he was gone. Buddha said that they should follow the law or the doctrine that he taught them. His last words to them were: "All composite things are doomed to extinction. Exert yourselves in wakefulness."

Buddha's body was cremated according to Hindu custom. Tradition, however, says that before burning the body, some remains were supposed to have been taken as relics to be shared by eight cities. And so the collar-bone and a tooth went to Ceylon, now called Sri Lanka, and some strands of hair went to Burma. Till the present these relics are held in veneration in these countries.

The whole doctrine of Buddha or the dharma (dhamma in Pali), is essentially found in his first sermon in Benares. It contains what is known as the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. Buddha, however, did not leave anything

in writing. His whole teaching was for a long while transmitted purely by oral tradition. According to the Great Chronicle of Ceylon, the oldest Buddhist scriptures were put into writing some six centuries after Buddha's death. The Benares Sermon is contained in a little book entitled *Dhammapada*, "Path of Virtue." It is considered the oldest Buddhist text in existence and forms part of the collection of the most ancient Buddhist Rule or Scriptures. The book includes the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path—teachings on practical morality and self-discipline, and on nonviolence and compassion.

The doctrine is a middle path which avoids the extremes of sensual indulgence and excessive self-mortification. In general it avoids the metaphysical intricacies of the Vedic tradition. The Buddhist doctrine is mainly a moral discipline and a therapy leading to insight and enlightenment.

### The Four Noble Truths

1. The universal fact of pain and suffering. Birth is suffering. Old age is suffering. Illness is suffering. Death is suffering. Suffering, too, is the presence of things we hate and the separation from or nonattainment of things we love. Suffering then is not only physical, but emotional and mental. On the other hand, Buddha pointedly speaks not of his suffering alone but that of everybody's. It is not merely "my sorrow," but "world sorrow."
2. The origin or cause of suffering. It is the craving thirst that causes suffering, the cycle of rebirths and the "renewal of becomings." This craving thirst comes with sensual delights which seek satisfaction, now here, now there. It is the craving for the gratification of the senses, or the craving for existence or for annihilation itself. Life then is impelled by cravings and desires, and by shallow, illusory needs. Goaded man toward one illusory goal after another and from one unsatisfaction to another, a craving, desiring life continually rehearses its unhappiness. The unbridled, thoughtless or unquestioned desires keep recurring again and again in one's present life and in succeeding lives.

Buddha borrowed two things from Hinduism. First, he borrowed the belief in transmigration (*samsara*) and the cycle of successive births, deaths and rebirths. Second, he borrowed the belief in retribution (*karma* or *kamma* in Pali), or the law of universal causality by which the effects of good and bad deeds are carried over to the succeeding life or

rebirth. We reap what we sow. If we sow evil, the effects of our acts will catch up with us either in this present life or in the next. If we sow good, we likewise harvest the good effects, and our next existence will be on a higher plane. Everything in existence is, therefore, due to a previous life because of this endless chain of cause and effect. Each of our actions in the present life has consequences in the next existence.

While the notions of *samsara* and *karma* are not original with Buddha, he does add the moral element. The desire and all-consuming lust and greed for pleasures, for existence, or for annihilation is the root force of all transmigration and endless cycle of rebirths and sufferings. All the unfulfilled desires and tendencies at the time of death are what beget a new rebirth and further suffering. In brief, it is this empty attachment and seeking for "self" which is out of joint, as it were, and constitutes the origin of all suffering. To liberate ourselves, therefore, from the cycle of becoming and suffering, we must renounce the "self." We must die to the "self." We must extirpate all this craving and greed, and thereby work out the prolongations of the *karma*. This is to be achieved, not by the performance of formal sacrifices or rituals, but by the earnest effort and discipline exercised by the individual himself.

3. The cessation of suffering. To put an end to all suffering in life, we must therefore put an end to all that craving and thirst and release ourselves from the hold of desire and from that empty seeking for the self.

Unlike Hinduism, Buddha denies the existence of any permanent, substantial human soul (*atman*). Like everything else in the world, the human individual is also in constant change. There is no "self" and no underlying personal identity. What is normally considered the self is really only an aggregate. It is an extrinsic combination of five different elements—the body, feelings, impulses, perceptions and consciousness. As a Buddhist metaphor says, a chariot is made up of the axle, wheels, frame, yoke, reins, goad-stick, and flagstaff. None of these parts of itself is the chariot. And when these parts are dismantled and separated one from the other, there is no chariot at all.

The individual person, then, is a transitory composite that is bound to pass away, since all composite things are doomed to extinction. The root of all suffering is this illusion or overweening attachment to this empty and false notion of the "self." The moral task, therefore, is to die to the self and

when one is removed, it is no longer a complete self

Siddhartha Gautama 11

to renounce the self and all self-seeking. Hence, the moral task is to renounce all desires, cravings and passions.

This view of the nonbeing of the self raised questions, it seems, even during the lifetime of Buddha. If there is no underlying personal identity, how then is transmigration to be explained? What precisely is carried over into the succeeding existence? If there is no substantial self, what is the point of all that striving for release from the cycle of suffering? What happens to the individual when he is released from the illusion and the cravings of the self? Does he then pass to nothingness or nonexistence?

On this point, the Buddhist typically avoids metaphysical speculation and keeps to his moral standpoint and his reliance on experiential insight. To the question whether there is a different or an identical, underlying person carried over to the next existence, the Buddhist answers: It is neither the same nor different. At death one body decomposes and another form emerges. However, the new being is linked to the old, not by a substantial soul but by the acts and the deeds (karma). The effects of evil deeds committed in a previous existence are carried over into the succeeding existence. The *karma*, then, which is generated by desire and craving, is what causes the birth of a new being.

Reincarnation

Hence, the doctrine of rebirth is based, not on a metaphysical theory of a substantial soul but on the moral law of karma. To ask whether a Buddhist saint exists or not, who, at the moment of death, has attained enlightenment and release from the cycle of rebirths, is to ask the wrong question. The language of "existence" that we use in this transient world is not applicable to that state which transcends our worldly concepts of existence and non-existence. Such an end-state is ineffable in terms of worldly existence.

Buddha, therefore, remains silent regarding such matters. He regards them as idle questions whose answers cannot be determined by man. Instead of preoccupying himself with such speculations, the faithful disciple should rather concentrate on meditation and on discipline to extirpate all cravings and all desires.

Unanswered questions

4. The path which leads to the cessation of suffering. To extirpate all desires and sufferings, to renounce all self-seeking, and to release ourselves from this empty illusion of the self and thereby attain enlightenment beyond all rebirths and all sufferings, we have to take the "eight-branch" or "eightfold path."

## The Eightfold Path

- ✓ 1. The right view. This means the understanding or the grasp of the Four Noble Truths which we have just seen. We must therefore have the right viewpoint which pierces the illusion of a self seeking for itself in vain.
- A 2. The right resolve or aspiration. This means that we must strive to observe what the right view and understanding have shown us. We must go beyond the seeking for the "I" and for what is "mine."
- ✓ 3. The right speech. We must try to avoid all that desire and self-seeking in words. We must refrain from such activities as gossip, idle talk, and slander. Our words must be marked by self-control, consideration and thoughtfulness.
- AC 4. The right action. We must practice the five precepts which are binding on all monks and lay people. They are: Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not lie. Thou shalt not have illicit sexual relations. Thou shalt not take intoxicating or alcoholic drinks.
- L 5. The right livelihood. We must avoid any occupation which does violence or harm to life in any form, such as being a butcher or a soldier. We must practice positive virtues like good will toward all beings and the forgiveness of injuries.
- E 6. The right effort. We must strive to find our own pace and our own way in this path toward emancipation and enlightenment. Therefore, we must engage not just in any action but only in mindful or thoughtful action.
- C 7. The right concentration. We must try to acquire a detached and calm attitude in our emotions and passions. We must try to see things as they are, free of all illusions and self-deceptions. We must free ourselves from the enslaving fantasies of the imagination.
- C 8. The right contemplation. We must quiet all irrelevant thoughts until we come to the true knowledge, not by reason or logic, but by intuition and by insight. At the point of highest insight, all sense experience ceases and the mind is released. "There is now no rebirth." Enlightenment is attained. It is the point of Nirvana (*Nibbana* in the Pali language).

*Nirvana* is the ultimate goal of the Eightfold Path. *Nirvana* literally means "to blow out" or "to extinguish." It is the point where, after the hard and long way of thoughtfulness, discipline, and conduct, the flames of desire are extinguished because the oil of *karma* is finally exhausted. It is the cessation of all desire for pleasure or for objects, for life or for

the self. *Nirvana* is the point of emancipation from the cycle of rebirths and suffering. More positively, it is the ineffable fullness of freedom and awareness and enlightenment.

*Nirvana* is attainable in this life. Buddha is the witness to that, although Buddhist tradition says that it took Buddha himself 547 births before attaining this point of enlightenment. Finally, at his death, Buddha is believed to have attained *Pari-nirvana*, which is the ultimate *Nirvana*, the *Nirvana* of no return.

*Nirvana* does not mean annihilation. However, it is a state that is ineffable. Hence, it is not pure nothingness. But neither is it anything like the nature or form of this worldly existence. It signifies a transcendent state that can only be expressed in negative terms. It can only be expressed by negating the words and categories predicated of our transitory world. It is not this, not that. It is unshakeable. It is neither existence nor nonexistence. As the Buddhist would say, one cannot point to *Nirvana*, just as he cannot point to the wind. In the popular mind, this state may be said to be ultimate joy or heavenly bliss. But to the one who has truly attained and experienced it, it is simply that which is, beyond all words. It is out of this world.

### Different Schools of Buddhism

About a century after the death of Buddha, the *Sangha*, the order of monks left by him, split up into two main branches. According to Buddhist tradition, soon after Buddha's death, there was a First Buddhist Council held at Rajagriha. It was held in a large cave with 500 monks in attendance. They were led by the chief disciple, Ananda. Some one hundred years later, there was a Second Buddhist Council with 12,000 monks present. It was at this council that some 10,000 monks broke off and formed a new school. The remaining minority group kept strictly to the doctrine and practice established originally by the founder. They were thus the conservatives. They were called the "ancients," or the "elders of the community" (*sthavira*). Their group was known as the School of Elders, or *sthaviravada* (in Pali, *Theravada*). The much bigger splinter group was called the "majoritarians," "those of the great community," or *Mahasanghika*. This latter group, which was more liberal, made the doctrine of Buddha more accessible to all and tended to interpret Buddha's doctrine and practice with greater freedom.

By the first century A.D., this second group had evolved into what is now known as the *Mahayana*, or the Grand Vehicle. It was a renewed Buddhism. The doctrine of salvation was not reserved only for a restricted circle of ascetic monks but addressed to all creatures. Somewhat derogatorily, they referred to the conservative exclusive group as the *Hinayana*, or the Little Vehicle. This was a label which of course the *Theravada* adherents resented. They always preferred to be known by their "ancient" name and designation which was descriptive of their fidelity to the Master's doctrine.

After the split into the two main branches the Buddhist scriptures came to be. The scriptures were committed to writing and formally established the differences between the two rival schools. The *Theravada* school considers the Pali collection as the authoritative canon. It is the only collection existing in its completeness in one Indian language. It was supposedly brought to Ceylon by Buddhist missionaries around the third century B.C. It is believed to have been written about six hundred years after Buddha's death. This canon is composed of the Three Baskets or Tipika. They are the Basket of Monastic Rules or *Vinaya Pitaka*, the Basket of Discourses or *Sutta Pitaka*, which is composed of five collections of doctrinal discourses, and the Basket of Higher or Abstruse Doctrine or *Abhidhamma*, which is made up doctrinal treatises regarding the terms and ideas found in the first two "baskets."

The *Mahayana* scriptures are composed of fragments of original Sanskrit texts and Chinese and Tibetan translations of other parts of Sanskrit texts now lost. They are also classified into Vinaya or monastic rules, Sutras or discourses, and Sas-tras or philosophical treatises.

The fact that one canon is originally based in Pali, and the other in Sanskrit explains the variance in key words such as *Gotama* and *Gautama*, *Kamma* and *Karma*, *Dhamma* and *Dharma*, *Nibbana* and *Nirvana*, *Sutta* and *Sutra*, *Tipitaka* and *Tripitaka*.

The *Theravada* school is also called Southern Buddhism, since it spread toward southern India, and eventually to Ceylon (now known as Sri Lanka), Burma, Siam (now known as Thailand), Laos, and Cambodia. The *Mahayana*, on the other hand, is also known as Northern Buddhism, since it spread northward to Gandhara and Kashmir and eventually to China, Tibet, Korea, North Vietnam and Japan.

The *Mahayana* school eventually separated into two major branches. The first is *Madyamika*, School of the Middle, also

known as *Sunyavada*, School of the Void. The second branch is the *Vijnanavada*, School of Theory of Knowledge. The *Madyamika* poses an Absolute which lies beyond our conceptual, contradiction-laden thought. This Absolute is referred to as the "Void," beyond all concepts, beyond all dualities and relations. It can be reached only by intuition. The *Vijnanavada*, a form of idealism, proposes that the external world is a mere product of our minds. Everything is the mind or consciousness. Nothing exists beyond our mind and our knowledge.

The *Theravada* school adheres strictly to the monastic order (*sangha*) and teachings (*dhamma*) of Buddha. The ideal Buddhist follows the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. The lay person tries to live up to the teaching as far as he or she is able. The monk strives to realize the doctrine to its fullest and to attain the virtues of the *arahat* or "worthy one" who is the perfect saint. The ideal therefore is to be *arahat*. Man is responsible for his own salvation by faithful adherence to the way taught by Buddha. No god or sacrificial ritual can win release from suffering and gain salvation. The individual himself, of any caste or origin, wins that release by his own thought, effort and discipline. Buddha is not a deity but a historical figure who has shown us the way. The doctrine is mainly ethical. It avoids metaphysical theorizing. It stresses moral practice and experiential insight, the way it was with the Master.

The *Mahayana* school on the other hand sees itself as a more profound interpretation of Buddhism and more truly faithful to the spirit of Buddha. It is pointed out that Buddha himself, upon attaining *nirvana*, came back from his ecstatic state to give of himself unselfishly. He compassionately taught his fellowmen and showed them the way out of their sufferings. The ideal, therefore, is not the *arahat*, who strives to achieve holiness for his own sake alone, but the *boddhisattva*. The ideal is the aspirant-Buddha, whose essence (*sattva*) is enlightenment or wisdom (*bodhi*). In other words, the ideal is one who has achieved enlightenment but has deferred going on to *nirvana* out of love and compassion for humanity. Out of love and compassion then he devotes himself to the good and salvation of fellowmen by the practice of the six active and heroic virtues (*paramita*). These virtues are generosity, vigor, patience, morality, meditative concentration and wisdom.

Furthermore, for the *Mahayana*, Buddha is not just an historical figure, as *Shakyamuni*, "Sage of the Shakyas," but the disclosure of the eternal Buddhahood. There is, therefore, an eternal, supraterrrestrial and deified Buddha, who from age to age reveals himself in his truth, manifests himself and teaches

men according to their needs. In this view, Gautama Buddha is only one among a multiplicity of Buddhas. All of them are seen as different temporal disclosures of the one, eternal, transcendent Buddhahood.

There is, for example, *Maitreya*. He is believed to be the future Buddha, who will come at some future age. There is *Amitabha* (*Amida* in Japan) who is Infinite life and Infinite light. Originally he was a *bodhisattva*, who is now worshipped as a Buddha. He is perhaps second only to the original Gautama Buddha in the veneration of *Mahayana* Buddhists. *Amitabha* was a monk who lived a long time ago and who vowed to devote his life and work to save others. Through the years, he is believed to have built up a "Treasury of Merit" so that anyone in need may draw upon it by meditating on his compassion and calling upon his name. This "Treasury" is also known as the "Ship of Amitabha's Vow." It is like a ship carrying individuals after death to the "Pure Land" or "Western Paradise," which lies far beyond the China western mountains.

There are also those who are revered not as Buddhas but as *bodhisattvas*. Most popular among them is *Kwan-Yin* (*Avalokiteshvara* or, in Japan, *Kwannon*). She is the Goddess of mercy. She was filled with love and kindness for others and vowed to come to the aid of any person who might need her help. She postponed entering Paradise at her death. Instead, she went to live on an island in the eastern China Sea, where even now there is a temple to which people come in pilgrimage to pray for her help to escape the sorrow of rebirth.

We see then that beside the thought and discipline imposed by the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, the *Mahayana* Buddhist relies also on the aid and intercession of Buddhas and *bodhisattvas*, who are perceived ultimately as manifestations of the one fundamental Buddhahood. In the *Mahayana* we see a more metaphysical system. In support of the ethical doctrine and discipline, there is an ontological theory of an absolute principle and ground which is referred to as the "Eternal Buddha," "Ultimate Reality," "the Void," or "Consciousness-Only." In effect, we see here a reprise of the *Upanishads'* one, all-encompassing, ultimate principle, immanent to everything that is.

There are figures or objects that the Buddhist regards as symbolic of the whole spirit of Buddhism. The Buddhist Wheel stands for the endless cycle of rebirth and suffering as well as for the eternity of truth as found in the First Sermon. Yet the wheel in ancient Indian tradition also stands for kingship, and for mastery and sovereignty over the cycle of desires and rebirths

and sufferings that Buddha achieved at the moment of enlightenment. The lotus flower which rises immaculately white out of murky puddles, signifies that any man, regardless of background or origin, can achieve purity and perfection, and is therefore worthy of love and compassion. There is of course the Bo-tree, reminiscent of the wisdom and enlightenment and Nirvana that Buddha finally achieved after a long path of self-renunciation, meditation and disciplined life.

### Study Guide Questions

1. Explain in what sense Buddhism was a reaction to the Hindu religion and practices of the time.
2. What were the four symbolic encounters of Siddhartha in Lumbini Park? Explain the meaning Siddhartha himself drew from them.
3. What does the term "buddha" mean?
4. In what sense is Buddha's doctrine a middle path?
5. Enumerate the Four Noble Truths and explain each. Why are they called "noble"?
6. What two main teachings did Buddha borrow from Hinduism? What is the moral element Buddha adds in modification of these two borrowings from Hinduism?
7. What is the root and origin of all human suffering for Buddha?
8. If that is true, what does human salvation essentially consist of? Where does salvation lie for Buddha?
9. What is the Eightfold Path? What is its over-all intention? Explain the eight parts or branches.
10. What does "nirvana" or "nibbana" signify? If it does not mean annihilation, what then is it?
11. Why does Buddha consider such questions as that of the substantial self and personal immortality to be irrelevant?
12. In what sense is the doctrine of rebirth for Buddha more of a moral principle than a metaphysical theory?
13. What were the two main branches Buddhism split into after Buddha's death? Explain the particularities of each branch.
14. From which branch did the later *Mahayana* School emerge?
15. What is the position of the *Mahayana* School? Of the *Theravada* School? Explain the terms "Mahayana" and "Theravada."

16. Explain in what sense the *Mahayana* School is more of a metaphysical system, whereas the *Theravada* remains a purely moral doctrine.
17. Show which of the two schools, by its doctrine, lead to social involvement and commitment. Explain.

### **Suggested Assignment**

Look up accounts of the recent resurgence of Buddhism in the contemporary world and write a summary of the phenomenon. Can you point to particular ills and needs of contemporary life, especially in the affluent countries of the world, which may have led people to seek answers in Buddhism? What aspects of Buddhism would respond to these anxieties and needs?

Or else do a research study on Buddhism as found in Philippines. Show whether its adherence is to the *Theravada* or to the *Mahayana* school.

Or else write a paper on Zen-Buddhism. Show its links with the original doctrine and practices of Buddha.

## Chapter Two

### Confucius (551-479 B.C.)

ALTHOUGH CONFUCIUS was of noble descent, he was born to a poor family. His forbears were originally of the state of Sung, but had to flee due to political reasons and resettle in the state of Lu, now called Shantung.

His family's name was *K'ung*. He was given the name *Ch'iu*, but was later to be known simply as *K'ung tzu*, "Master Kung." (The Chinese word *tzu* also has the connotation of "being a scholar" or "philosopher." For this reason, most Chinese philosophers carry the title *tzu*, e.g., *Chuang-tzu*, *Meng tzu*, *Hsun-tzu*.) Confucius was also sometimes addressed as *K'ung fu tzu*, "the Master Kung," which was then latinized as "Confucius," the name by which he is commonly known in the West.

Confucius was probably born in 551 B.C., but there are sources that say 552 B.C. His father died when he was barely three years old. Very early, he manifested a fondness for learning. But since he was of poor social background, he had to manage by self-education. He was married at the age of nineteen and had a son and a daughter. For a while, he earned a living keeping accounts for those who were property owners. Confucius said of himself that he was of humble circumstance when he was young and therefore knew many menial skills. Eventually, he became a private teacher, teaching young pupils for a fee. But he also accepted poor students, provided they were capable, even if they had nothing to offer him in payment except perhaps "a bundle of dried meat." It was not long before he gathered a following of disciples around him.

At about the age of fifty, he was appointed as a kind of minister of justice or police commissioner for the state of Lu. However, after a short while, he resigned from office when he

saw that the ruler of the state was not about to follow the reform measures he had proposed.

He went on to travel with his disciples for thirteen years to other states, offering people his counsel and ideas of morality and social reform. But the feudal lords were not appreciative of his ideas and advice. Frustrated, he returned to his native state of Lu and decided he would devote the rest of his life to teaching and forming disciples. He was then sixty-seven or sixty-eight years old.

Toward the end of his life Confucius was greatly saddened by the death of his son and that of his promising young disciple, *Yen Hui*. Confucius himself died in 479 B.C., without seeing his moral and social ideas effect any significant influence in the community. However, several centuries later, in 136 B.C., in the early part of the Han dynasty, the whole Confucian philosophy and the Confucian Classics were established as the official ideology of the Chinese empire. They were adopted particularly as the core of the educational system and of the civil service examinations. Since then Confucian thought has continued to maintain its influence among the peoples of China and of East Asia. His teachings are basically contained in the *Lun yu*, a small book of twenty brief chapters. It is more commonly known as the "Analects of Confucius."

Confucius lived during the decline of the Chou dynasty. The central government had lost power and had started to break down. The country was divided into warring feudal states, ruled by hereditary autocratic lords who were wont to make war at whim, tax their people oppressively, and impose on them heavy forced labor.

Confucius saw the need to reform social and political life and to relieve the suffering of the common people. Fundamentally, his solution was to return to the sources of tradition, with emphasis on moral education and the observance of the traditional rites and ceremonies. Hence, Confucius did not see himself as an innovator, but rather as a reformer advocating a return to the old ways and visions of ancient Chinese tradition.

We can perhaps view the thought of Confucius as essentially a reprise of two old ideas in the Chinese tradition—*Tao* and *Te*.

One of the most ancient traditions of China is the belief in the Way (*Tao*). Not very different from the ancient Western notion of *Phusis* and *Logos*, *Tao* signifies basically the way, or nature. It is the fundamental principle, the substance of which

all things are made, and the standard to which all things must conform. Since it is that of which all things are made, it is a transcendental principle common to all beings. In this sense it is beyond all beings. It is the way and the truth and the being of all things.

Another element of ancient Chinese tradition is the notion of virtue (*te*), which signifies some human trait or quality considered as a gift or an endowment which man receives from Heaven. In a sense, when the *Tao* acts in man, it becomes *te* or virtue and constitutes man's very attitude of mind and character.

The main stress of Confucius is the pursuit of moral character. There is only one worthwhile purpose man can have in life. It is to be a good man, to be a complete or total man. Morality presupposes two things. It presupposes a basic natural stuff or substance (*chih*) and a nurturing, patterning, formative process (*wen*).

The material substance of morality is a basic inclination to do what is right. It is seen by Confucius as that which tradition regarded as "endowment from Heaven." In this sense moral virtue or moral character, in Confucius's view, is in part a gift from above. It is an innate tendency toward what is right. But, on the other hand, this original substance is like a seed that needs to be nurtured and brought to fullness by man himself. This is brought about by a long process of education and application.

Education for Confucius consists mainly of the study of ancient Chinese literature, known as the Confucian Classics, which we shall see in more detail later. These texts are composed of ancient poetic songs, historical documents, rituals and codes of behavior. Confucius considered them as a repository of human wisdom and moral insight especially suited to draw out into actuality and expression the original endowment or potential of man.

Hand in hand with an education which is rooted in the inheritance of the past, moral formation involves a life-long effort at self-overcoming and application in order to acquire the mental attitude and manner of conducting oneself which are proper for a man of right and virtue. The moral man then is the fully developed man who has these two elements—the natural endowment and the formative, refining process, combined in a harmonious balance.

The moral man is the gentleman, the complete or superior man, *chun tzu*. More precisely, he has acquired what Confucius considered the three main virtues—humaneness (*jen*), wisdom

(*chih*), and courage (*yung*). As Confucius himself said, "There are three things constantly on the lips of the gentleman none of which I have succeeded in following: A man of humaneness never worries, a man of wisdom is never of two minds, a man of courage is never afraid." (*Analects*, XIV.28)

Humaneness (*jen*) means precisely what it says. It is a sense of connaturality or respect, love and good will toward fellow man. This is the most important moral quality. It is so important that it flows over to the two other virtues, and tends to be interchangeable with the notion of the moral man or gentleman. "Fan Ch'ih asked about humaneness. The Master said, 'Love your fellowmen.' He asked about wisdom. The Master said, 'Know your fellowmen.'" (*Analects*, XII.22) "Tzu-lu said, 'Does the gentleman consider courage a supreme quality?' The Master said, 'For the gentleman it is morality that is supreme. Possessed of courage but devoid of morality, a gentleman will make trouble while a small man will be a brigand.'" (*Analects*, XVII.23)

There is one rule or "method of humaneness" which Confucius recommends. It is the rule of the *shu*. It means using oneself as an analogy for arriving at what others like and dislike. "Tzu-Kung asked, 'Is there a single word which can be a guide to conduct throughout one's life?' The Master said, 'It is perhaps the word *shu*. Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire.'" (*Analects*, XV.24)

While the rule of *shu* is expressed negatively, it is recommended simply as a method or as a kind of heuristic tool for putting into action the positive element, *chung*, which means doing one's best in the love of fellowman. "Sometime ago I heard it from you, Master, that the gentleman instructed in the Way loves his fellow men . . ." (*Analects*, XVII.4)

Humaneness also means overcoming oneself. It means overcoming one's self-interest or one's acquisitiveness and desire for gain. "To return to the observance of the rites through overcoming the self constitutes humaneness. If for a single day a man could return to the observance of the rites through overcoming himself, then the whole Empire would consider humaneness to be his." (*Analects*, XII.1) More positively then, the other side of overcoming our egotistic tendencies is the return to the rites (*li*). The rites are the traditional body of rules and ceremonies. They have been passed on since Antiquity and govern all aspects of life from birth to death. In Confucius' view, since these rites were the heritage of past insights and experiences regarding man, their respectful observance should produce the proper attitude and behavior toward fellowman.

The second virtue of the gentleman is intelligence or wisdom (*chih*). The man of wisdom is "never of two minds." He has the ability to distinguish the right from wrong. He is not deceived by what is spurious. He does not mistake it for what is true and valid.

Wisdom is the possession of two combined elements of learning (*hsueh*) and thinking (*ssu*).

Learning is essentially the study of the ancient literature of China, which Confucius regarded as the accumulated wisdom of the past regarding man. This consisted of the five Confucian classics. These are the "Classic of Poetry" (*Shih Ching*), composed of some three hundred odes, originally sung to the accompaniment of music and in the case of temple songs, also with the accompaniment of dancing, the "Classic of Changes" (*I Ching*), basically a book on fortune-telling with philosophical and folklore accretions, the "Book of Rituals" (*Li Chi*), which contained ancient traditional rules, customs, and manners of Chinese society covering all aspects and phases of life, including such details as dress and posture, the way of spending the day with a friend, the "Classic of Documents" (*Shu Ching*), composed of diverse kinds of early state papers and official documents and declarations, and the *Ch'un Ch'iu*, an annal of the state of Lu, consisting of entries of major events from 722 to 481 B.C.

Together with learning, however, there must also be thought. We must try to improve on what we have learned from the past. This requires reflection on the insights of the past, rethinking them in view of the spirit and ideals at the origin of these traditional insights. On the other hand, thinking by itself, independent of past learning, will bring us nowhere. For it will be thinking in a vacuum, without any substance. "The Master said, 'If one learns from others but does not think, one will be bewildered. If, on the other hand, one thinks but does not learn from others, one will be in peril.'" (*Analects*, II.15)!

The third virtue of the gentleman is courage (*yung*). Confucius puts it very simply: "Faced with what is right, to leave it undone shows a lack of courage." (*Analects*, II.24) Courage signifies therefore the overcoming of fear or indifference in the pursuit of what is right. It is clear, however, that courage must be based on something other than itself. It must be based on what is right. Without this, courage would be devoid of purpose and direction.

Rightness (*yi*) is the standard of courage. It is the standard for all human acts. It is the standard, too, for learning and the rites. We have already seen that the accumulated wisdom we acquire from the past must be reflected upon and rethought.

from time to time. Similarly, as a code of rules of conduct passed on by tradition, the rites, which constitute a great part of what must be learned, carry a certain traditional authority. But by themselves they do not necessarily constitute that which is valid. They must be reexamined from time to time in view of what is right. If necessary, they must be modified, as demanded by the concrete circumstances, added to, or diminished.

"The Master said, 'The *Yin* built on the rites of the *Hsia*. What was added and what was omitted can be known. The *Chou* built on the rites of the *Yin*. What was added and what was omitted can be known. Should there be a successor to the *Chou*, even a hundred generations hence can be known.'" (*Analects*, II.23)

The question then arises what is rightness itself based on? What in the end determines the rightness of man's acts?

At this point we may perhaps bring in the Confucian notion of Heaven's Decree (*T'ien Ming*). Actually, this is another ancient belief of Chinese tradition. Tradition dictates that the Emperor rules by virtue of Heaven's Decree and that it is his duty to rule for the good of his people. In the case of dereliction of duty, Heaven may withdraw its decree and pass it on to another more worthy of the power and position. In Confucius, however, Heaven's Decree seems to be a duty incumbent not only upon the Emperor but upon all men. It seems to signify a moral command present in all men. It is something of the nature of a universal moral imperative to which every man is subject.

Heaven's Decree for Confucius then does not necessarily refer to a religious dimension in man, except perhaps in the sense of some transcendent principle. He looked upon the religious practices of his day as superstition. *T'ien Ming* for him seems to designate rather an overarching moral principle. It is the source of all moral duty and of all human inclination toward the right. Furthermore, man needs time and effort to be able to arrive at some comprehension of such a heavenly decree and even more to align one's life according to it. "The Master said,

At fifteen I set my heart on learning; at thirty I took my stand; at forty I came to be free from doubts; at fifty I understood the Decree of Heaven; at sixty my ear was attuned; at seventy I followed my heart's desire without overstepping the line." (*Analects*, II.4)

Beyond Heaven's Decree, there is the Way (*Tao*) as described above, which Confucius also inherited from tradition. In Confucius, however, it is not clear whether Heaven's Decree is in any way distinct from the Way. We read for example, "The

Master said, 'I set my heart on the Way, base myself on virtue, lean upon humaneness for support and take my recreation in the arts.' (*Analects*, VII.6) This would seem to show the fundamental nature of the Way in relation to morality. On the other hand, we saw from the citation above the ultimacy of the Decree of Heaven. Further, we read, "Confucius said, 'The gentleman stands in awe of three things. He is in awe of the Decree of Heaven. He is in awe of great men. He is in awe of the words of the sages.'" (*Analects*, XVI.80) In any case, in Confucius, both Heaven's Decree and the Way are of a fundamental nature. They are ground and source of morality.

It must also be pointed out that morality for Confucius does not consist essentially of individual perfection. The moral virtues are at the same time social virtues—humaneness, wisdom, courage. The *chun tzu*, then, is truly moral and complete insofar as man is at the same time and by the same token a social being contributing to the good of the community.

Human society may be divided into five basic human relations: between husband and wife, father and son, elder and younger brother, friend and friend, ruler and subject.

In Confucius's view, the family is the paradigm for the human community at large. Family relations extend to the broader social relations in such a way that a good son and a good younger brother, by the same token, should be a good subject or citizen. Mankind, in a true sense, is one large family governed by the principles of love, reciprocity and differential functions. However, there must be gradations of love and kindness, starting from within the family and extending to friends and neighbors, fellow townsmen, fellow countrymen, and the rest. Otherwise, one runs the risk of being untrue to his word and to his role and function by proclaiming love of mankind when he has not even started to love those who are his closest relations.

The human community organized as state is a moral entity. Politics is the extension of ethics. It is the extension of the virtue of humaneness. Hence, the goal of the state and of politics can only be one thing. It cannot be material gain or power. It can only be the good and welfare of the people, the community of fellow human beings.

Contrary to the thinking and practice of his time, Confucius held that the right to govern depends, not on divine ancestry or appointment, but on the possession of moral virtue and the ability required to serve the good of the people.

By the same principle, the gentleman, or the truly moral man, when required by the circumstances, must be prepared to take up public office to serve the common welfare. To be

moral is to be humane. It is to love fellowmen both as individuals and as community.

The duties of government are threefold: to assure the satisfaction of the people's material needs, to equip the people with arms and military training for the community's defense, to provide the people, by way of virtuous living and by example, moral formation and guidance. In the end "to govern (*cheng*) is to correct (*cheng*)." In other words, it is to set the correct example. (*Analects*, XII.17),

One overall trait which perhaps summarizes all of Confucius's thought is the fundamental dialectic between a sense of the original source or ground, and the sense of the socio-historical. We see it in the tension between what comes as an endowment from Heaven and the need for human effort and cultivation, or the relation between the demand for what is right and the need for performance of the rites. We see it in the interaction between the role of thinking and the contributions of learning rooted in history and tradition.

We see a kind of bipolar gravitational field pervading all of Confucian thought. On one hand, there is the drawing power of that which is the source or ground of the moral demand, signified by the notion of Heaven's Decree or the Way. On the other hand, there is the pull and attraction of the human and the historical, expressed in the ancient classics and in ongoing human experience. In this sense, the thought of Confucius is a constant struggle to discern, in the midst of human affairs, the Decree of Heaven or the Way. Vice versa, it is the struggle to render the Way concrete and actual, through the exercise of moral virtue and the performance of the rites and the practices of daily life.

After the death of Confucius, his teachings, continued by his disciples, assumed two different directions. One direction, emphasized the social and political aspect of Confucian thought. It is represented by the work "Great Learning" (*Ta-hsueh*), attributed to *Tseng-tzu* (505-c.436 B.C.), a disciple of Confucius. The second direction, laying more stress on the psychological aspect of the Master's teachings, is articulated in the work "Doctrine of the Mean" (*Chung-yung*), attributed to *Tzu Ssu* (483-402 B.C.), a grandson of Confucius. Much later, two eminent minds emerged in the Confucian tradition in the persons of *Meng tzu* or *Mencius* (371-289 B.C.) and his younger contemporary, *Hsun-tzu* (third century B.C.). *Mencius* stressed the essential goodness of human nature and the innate right of subjects to revolt against an unjust ruler. *Hsun-Tzu*, on the other hand, was more empirically oriented and emphasized the

necessity for man to be formed and humanized through the social organization, and the system of laws and regulations. Often, a parallel is drawn between the commanding influence in Chinese thought of the triumvirate Confucius-Mencius-Hsun tzu and the ascendancy of the Socrates-Plato-Aristotle line over Western tradition.

### Study Guide Questions

1. Explain in what sense Confucius saw himself not as an innovator but rather as a reformer.
2. What do the traditional Chinese notions of *Tao* and *te* mean? How does Confucius interpret these two traditional notions?
3. What are the two constitutive elements of morality according to Confucius?
4. What does education consist of for Confucius?
5. Explain the Confucian concept of the *chun tzu*.
6. What are the three fundamental virtues of the *chun tzu*?
7. Explain the meaning of the fundamental virtue of *jen*.
8. What is the rule of the *shu*? What do you understand by *chung* in relation to the rule of the *shu*?
9. What is meant when we say "humaneness" is also the overcoming of the self?
10. How is the observance of the rites related to "humaneness" and the "overcoming of the self"?
11. What does wisdom mean for Confucius? What are the two elements of wisdom? Explain how they are related to each other.
12. What are the Confucian Classics? Explain their place and role in Confucius' doctrine.
13. What is courage for Confucius?
14. What does *yi* mean? How is it related to the three fundamental virtues?
15. What does *T'ien Ming* signify for Confucius? How is it related to the *Tao*?
16. How are ethics and politics related to each other for Confucius? Explain why the truly moral man for Confucius must be willing and ready to take up public office.
17. What are the five basic human relations? In what sense is the family the paradigm for society-at-large?

18. Explain what is the proper goal of the state and of politics in general for Confucius. What then are the duties of government?
19. Explain the fundamental interaction or dialectic in Confucius between the sense of the sociohistorical and the sense of the original source or ground.

### **Suggested Assignment**

Some recent economic studies of countries of East Asia have shown correlations between Confucian cultural influence and social dynamism. Look up these studies and write an essay about traits and features of Confucianism that could possibly explain such correlations.

Or else write a paper comparing Buddha's doctrine centered on the extirpation of all self-seeking and Confucius' doctrine centered on humaneness. Show similarities and differences.

Or else write a paper showing how our traditional Philippine culture, though strong on human relations and the interpersonal, is not Confucian. Show the differences.

## Chapter Three

### Plato (429-348 B.C.)

#### Problem of Unity and Multiplicity

ONE OF THE FIRST PROBLEMS that early Greek thinkers were preoccupied with was the unity and multiplicity of things. On the one hand, it seemed obvious that the world is in constant flux, always changing, thus ever different from what it was the moment before. Furthermore, it would seem that this ever changing world also consists of many different things, each having its own particular characteristics and properties. On the other hand, it seemed just as evident to these Greek thinkers that these diverse things, diverse across time and space, could not be so distinct from one another as to constitute completely different worlds. For that would make things completely chaotic and incomprehensible. Yet it seems just as obvious that there is but one ordered rational world, subsisting through all the changes, one world underlying all those seemingly different things. This was a fundamental belief or assumption of the Greek mind, that there is a *Logos* or Reason, a kind of all-encompassing, self-instituting, self-governing order prevailing over all of reality. One manifest effect of *Logos* is the *kosmos*, the ordered universe of earth, planets, and stars governed by eternal, immutable laws. The problem, then, was how to reconcile this unity and multiplicity of things, how to understand the reason behind the seeming contradiction between unity and the diversity across time and space. Heraclitus emphasized the transience and oppositeness of things, yet at the same time pointing out that such diversities are constantly under the same lawful order and reason. Parmenides, on the

other hand, emphasized the permanence and unity of all being while allowing for the secondary changes and differences.

### Theory of Ideas

It is in the context of this general problem of reconciling unity and multiplicity that we might understand Plato's theory of ideas or forms. For Plato, human knowledge is possible only insofar as man is able to grasp some stable structures or relations in the midst of all the changing sensible world. As had already been pointed out by Parmenides, there must be some stable being as the foundation and object of true knowledge. It was also clear to Plato that true or valid knowledge does exist, as exhibited by the sciences of the time, such as arithmetic, geometry, grammar, and Pythagorean numbers governing musical harmony, and astronomy as well as geometrical figures. Thus, Plato theorized that there must be a world of permanent and immutable forms which are the proper object of human knowledge. This alone could explain the fact that, notwithstanding the flux of things, man is able to know. The fact of human knowledge, therefore, would seem to argue to the existence of another world aside from the ever changing sensible world, a world of spiritual and immutable ideal forms.

Moreover, this world of ideal forms is the source and foundation of the sensible or material world. This sensible world exhibits gradients of greater or lesser degree, such as the more or less good, the more or less beautiful. But it never presents that which is the good itself or the beautiful itself, the *parousia*. Hence, Plato argued, the sensible world by metaphysical *participation* is the pale copy or reflection of the ideal world. Thus the sensible world proceeds from the ideal world as its source of being and exemplary model. Within the world of ideal forms itself, there is an ascending order of more and more inclusive, more and more fundamental ideas. All these ideas are eventually subsumed under the ideas of Movement and Stillness, which in turn are subsumed under the ideas of Being and Nonbeing (Nonbeing is relative nonbeing or potential being). All of these ideas ultimately fall under the paramount idea of the Good, insofar as all beings and potential beings are unfoldings of the Good. The Good therefore is the Idea of ideas, Source of all ideas and of all things, the Absolute itself, excluding all limitation and all potentiality, the Light and Ultimate principle of explanation. Everything is a participation of the Good.

If human knowledge is the "grasping" of the ideal forms, which is a world other than the sensible world, how then does man come upon these ideal forms amidst the ever fleeting sensible world? How is knowledge possible under the circumstances? Here we come to a second feature of Plato's philosophy, namely, his theory of *Reminiscence*.

### Theory of Reminiscence

Man, for Plato, is a reflection of the duality of the sensible and ideal worlds. Man himself is composed of a body and soul. The body is made up of the four traditional elements—earth, water, air and fire. The soul consists of three distinct faculties, three levels of knowledge and desire. There is, at the lowest level, sensation (*aisthesis*), ordered to the cloudy reflections of the ideal forms in sensible things. On the level of sensation there is the corresponding sense desire (*epithumia*), seeking satisfaction in the ever changing and thus formless, endlessly frustrating material things. There is, secondly, opinion (*doxa*), which in itself is not free from error but is sufficient for ordinary practical matters such as the hypothetical sciences and the government of communal life. The corresponding desire is spirit (*thumos*), a kind of spontaneous tendency toward everything beautiful and good. Thirdly, there is the mind or intellect (*nous*), the immortal part of the soul, the capacity for truth and wisdom. Its corresponding desire is the will (*boule*), which is the soul's tendency toward the Good.

Given this composition of man, Plato explains by way of a *parabole* or myth that there was a time when the soul, living in the spiritual world of ideal forms, was not bonded to the body. Due, however, to some Fall of man, consequent upon some evil deed, the soul was exiled to the material world and thus imprisoned in the body. The story itself of the Fall and the consequent imprisonment of the soul in the body was not original with Plato. It had been propounded previously by Pythagoras and Empedocles. It was a popular belief that was part of the whole religious tradition of the Greek culture at the time. What was original in Plato was the way he integrated this Fall of man with his theory of ideas. In this fallen state man is forgetful of the world of ideas of his previous existence. However, insofar as the material world is a shadowy reflection or participation of the ideal world, the sojourn of the soul in the material world serves as occasion for it to reminisce, to recall the ideal forms of its previous state. The encounter with

the material world serves as an occasion for the soul to remember what in a sense it had always known from the beginning.<sup>3</sup>

The myths of the soul's preexistence and the Fall allows Plato to explain the moral dimension of man. In the fallen state, man is torn between two tendencies. On the one hand, by virtue of its imprisonment in the body, the soul finds itself dragged down, as if by some leaden weight, toward a life of mere sense and physical pleasure. On the other hand, the soul is marked by a certain deep disquietude, a fundamental yearning for that which is beyond, for that which is ideal. This "tendency of the soul" is for Plato the expression of the soul's connaturality with the Good and its preexistence in the world of ideas.

Due to the Fall and the consequent imprisonment in the body, man must now die unto himself bit by bit, by a method of purification, gradually restraining his passions and gaining control of himself and thereby liberating himself, that is to say, liberating the soul from the hold of the world and of the body and reuniting it with the Good. The life of man is, therefore, a spiritual voyage that is really a return to one's roots and beginnings, a kind of quest or pilgrimage in fidelity to this natural orientation of man to that which is the Good.

This spiritual voyage eventually leads man on a dialectic or ascending path. It starts from *eros*, the desire of the physically beautiful and the desire to procreate the physically beautiful. It then moves on to the higher desire for the more spiritually beautiful, and the desire to procreate spiritual offspring, such as poetic works, the sciences, social and legal institutions. It finally arrives at the last stage, which is the union with the Ideal Beauty and Good Itself, which *eros* was unconsciously searching for all along. This highest, ultimate stage signifies not mere knowledge, but a kind of mystical touch of something that is really beyond and transcendent to man. Such a state is really ineffable and incommunicable, capable of expression only in terms of the Good's attributes such as Truth, Proportion and Beauty. In this final state of union, the soul is liberated from all change and all tribulations and thus attains true immortality, which was really the point and goal of all the desire for physical and spiritual procreation.

He, who in his life attains wisdom and finds the way to the Good, owes it as his duty to the Good to enlighten others along the true path. It is in this regard that Plato sees the relation between morality and politics. The philosophers, those men of wisdom who have found the path to the Good, must lead the community toward the one goal of life, the attainment of

the Good. With that end in view, they must see to the maintenance of the basic moral virtues in communal life—temperance over sense pleasures, courage to overcome fear and face danger and defend the city-state when necessary, justice which renders each one his due and thus unifies the community, and finally wisdom, the contemplation of and discerning familiarity with the Good. The whole purpose of the polis or the city-state, therefore, is to make possible, to enable man to lead the life of moral virtue and wisdom.

On the other hand, he who at the end of his life has failed to attain the goal of life by not going beyond mere physical desires and the pleasures of the sensible world will be led to judgment. After a period of expiation, he will be reincarnated, either as an animal or as a man, depending upon the misdeeds of his past life. He is destined to remain reincarnated and tied to the body, until his soul has learned its way through the proper path of purification and ascension. If necessary, there will be several repeated reincarnations. (Here we see perhaps a trace of Hindu influence in Plato's thought.)

In brief, Plato's philosophy views man and the world as having proceeded from the Good, metaphysically participating in the Good, and seeking ultimately to return to the Good.<sup>4</sup>

### Study Guide Questions

1. Explain briefly the fundamental problem perceived by Greek thinkers in general regarding the unity and the multiplicity of things.
2. What is meant by the Greek notions of *Logos* and *kosmos*?
3. How does Plato argue that the fact of human knowledge attests to the existence of stable forms and ideas?
4. How does Plato show that this world of forms is the source and foundation of the sensible world?
5. Describe the hierarchy within the world of forms itself.
6. What does *participation* mean for Plato?
7. How does man, in the midst of a sensible changing world, come to grasp the world of forms?
8. Describe Plato's myth of the Fall.
9. How does Plato use the Fall to explain the moral dimension of man?
10. In what sense is life a pilgrimage or a spiritual voyage in Plato's doctrine?

11. What is the relation between morality and politics for Plato?
12. What is the purpose of the *polis* in his philosophy?
13. What is the place and function of reincarnation in his doctrine?
14. In the light of reincarnation, would it mean then that in Plato's doctrine everyone in the end necessarily returns to the Good?

### **Suggested Assignment**

Write an essay showing Platonic influence in a newspaper column or article you have read, or a writer or thinker you might have studied recently. Or write an essay regarding certain patterns or aspects of Filipino cultural practices and beliefs that seem to echo Plato's thought.

Or else write an essay comparing the Mahayana School of Buddhism and Plato's doctrine. Show similarities and differences.

## Chapter Four

### Aristotle (384-323 B.C.)

ARISTOTLE WAS A STUDENT of Plato. Thus, in the early period of his teaching and writing, he was a faithful Platonist. He eventually developed, however, his own system of thought quite different from that of his former master.

Aristotle believed that ethics is not a science (*episteme*), dealing with absolute and eternal truths, but an art (*techne*), the art of living well. As art, therefore, ethics does not proceed by deduction from first principles, nor does it lead by induction to first principles. Rather, Aristotle viewed ethics as a comparative method, a dialectic as he would say, comparing different opinions regarding good and bad, and arriving at a set of prudential directives of limited generality. It is for this reason, perhaps, that Aristotle's ethics stands independently of his metaphysics. Besides, he developed his metaphysics after his ethics, much later in his career.

Sifting through the prevailing moral opinions of his Greek tradition, Aristotle set about inquiring about man, about his purposes and ends in life, and the conditions needed for the attainment of these ends.

What then is the good? The good is that which is the end of any being, that which a being tends toward. But for man, there seems to be a whole variety of ends. Men all seek for happiness, but some men seek happiness in pleasure, others in wealth, others still in power. The point, however, is not simply what man seeks for, but what is his true end? Does man seek some kind of ultimate end for which all these other ends are sought, the end beyond which there is no other, insofar as it constitutes his proper fulfillment and thus, his true happiness?

## The Purpose of Man

In quest of such an ultimate end, Aristotle introduced a new concept, more objective than the concept of happiness, namely, the proper function (*ergon*) or purpose of man, by which man attains the fulfillment of his being. What then is man? Concretely, man is a being composed of soul and body. The soul is that part of the composite which animates and commands, the body is the part which is subordinate, as the tool is to the artisan, or the slave to the master. The soul has two main parts, the rational and the irrational. The rational soul, completely independent of the body, is further subdivided into the speculative intellect, pure thought or intellection (*theoretike dianoia*), and the practical intellect (*to praktikon dianoetikon*). The practical intellect is ordained toward action and determines appropriate means to attain the end. The irrational soul, closely united with the body, is subdivided into the vegetable part which is manifested by the activities of nutrition, growth and reproduction, and the desiring part, which is further subdivided into three progressive levels. They are unruly and irrational sense desires and covetousness (*epithumia*), spontaneous impulses (*thumos*), desires and tendencies which may partially coincide with the dictates of reason, and wishes and desires (*boulesis*), completely subordinated to the dictates of reason. Wishes and desire in contrast with the first two have as object something stable, namely, that which is perceived as good. In the end, as we shall see later, the task of morality is to effect a harmonious combination between the rational commands of the practical intellect and the docile wishes and desires *boulesis*.

We see in Aristotle's ethics the strong influence of Plato's dualism of body and soul, which Aristotle was to overcome only later with the development of his metaphysics. Thus, the real man is seen to be his soul, and the fundamental activity of the soul is reason. Reason, as we have seen previously, is a fundamental concept in the ancient Greek tradition which in general is an all-encompassing, self-instituting, self-governing order prevailing over all reality. That man is rational would mean, therefore for Aristotle, that man in some special way participates in this all-encompassing *Logos*, not merely in the sense of being governed by reason which the whole world is, but in the sense that man has within him a capacity for *immanent* activity of self-instituting, self-governing order. Man is unlike the lower beings, whose specific activities are all *tran-*

sitive activities. Transitive activities are activities initiated from without and terminated in a purpose or end outside of the individual being. Thus, mineral, plant, and animal activities are determined by the external environment and terminate in some end or purpose external to the individual, such as for example the enrichment and perpetuation of the species. Man, however, as rational being is capable of activity starting from within and terminating in a purpose which remains within man, within the activity itself, thus *immanent*, like in the act of intellection.

If reason or immanent activity is that which is specific to man or to his soul, then the end or function (*ergon*) of man must have something to do with this specific activity of man. From the very nature of immanent activity, as we have seen, the end could not very well be something external to the activity itself. Hence, for Aristotle, the end or function of man could only be the immanent activity of reason itself brought to its fullest extent, namely, the moral virtues within the framework of the communal life of the *polis* and the act of contemplation.

Aristotle takes the moral virtues of his teacher Plato, but instead of considering them as mere means toward eventual union with the Good, Aristotle makes them the very ends of man, or at least one level of the ends of man.

### A Morally Virtuous Act

Objectively, a morally virtuous action for Aristotle consists of a measured activity, following the rule of the "just middle" (*mesotes*), neither deficient nor excessive, with reason ordering the desires and passions into a harmonious whole. Thus, for example, the virtue of courage consists of an activity which is neither pusillanimous nor reckless, but steadfast in the face of danger, thereby manifesting the nobility and excellence of man and of the human spirit. Subjectively, virtue is an activity which proceeds from certain proper dispositions. A virtuous act is one which proceeds from a habitual state or disposition acquired by constant practice, where the doing of the virtuous act has become a kind of second nature, the action being posed firmly and surely, without fail and without any doubt or hesitation. For Aristotle, an action done after going through agonizing doubts and temptations is a sign that man has not acquired mastery over his unruly desires and passions.

Furthermore, a virtuous act is one which proceeds from the right intention. This means that the action is desired for its

own sake and not for some ulterior motive beyond the action itself. For example, in the virtue of friendship, the intended goal of the friendship should be the human relationship itself, the mutual good will binding two or more people, each loving the other for his own sake, rather than for some extraneous purpose such as to curry favor, to acquire some advantage or pleasure from the other.

From what we have seen thus far, we might, therefore, say that for Aristotle a moral virtue is a rational measured activity following the rule of the "just middle," motivated by the right intention and proceeding from a permanent disposition acquired through repeated exercise of the act. It will be seen, however, that in such a definition the concept of moral virtue is not yet complete. It implies a relation to some norm we have not seen so far. For example, what is the norm or rule for "just middle"? In the absence of some further norm, the "just middle" could very well be mere expediency and calculation. Right intention is needed but what is the norm or rule of right intention? Would any action desired for its own sake then be good? Similarly, a permanent disposition is needed but a permanent disposition to perform what kind of activity finally? A permanent disposition without a rule or norm could be either a virtue or a vice.

### Practical Reason

Presumably, the inevitable answer to all these queries is reason. Just so. But reason then will have to be made more precise. Thus, Aristotle proposes, apart from the moral virtues, a kind of master virtue, a virtue of virtues so to speak, namely, practical wisdom (*phronesis*). Practical wisdom for Aristotle means knowledge on one hand, which participates in the act of contemplation which we shall see later, and action, on the other hand, which is akin to the moral virtues. As knowledge, practical wisdom provides the insight to the truth, regarding the intrinsic worth and excellence and beauty (*kalon*) of the action to be done. As action, practical wisdom is the practical intellect which properly decides to act. It takes the appropriate means (*prohairesis*) in the situation in view of the intended goal and takes command of one's desires and passions. It thus results not only in knowledge and wishful thinking, but in efficacious action. Practical wisdom, then, is the proper activity and virtue of the practical intellect, by which man as the source of action is the union of desire and thought. Viewed in this

light, the moral virtues are merely particular aspects of the one master active virtue which is practical wisdom.

Like Plato, Aristotle views the communal life of the *polis* as the proper place for the exercise of moral virtue. However, unlike Plato, Aristotle does not consider the life of the *polis* as merely a means for the attainment of moral virtues and the Good. Rather, the communal life of the *polis* is seen in its essence to be the very life of moral virtues and thus the *polis* constitutes one of the ends of man. In other words, Aristotle seems to view the organized life of the *polis* itself as one immanent activity whereby man precisely achieves his humanity as a rational being.

Through organized economic activity, typified by the virtue of *temperance* (discipline, hard work and the judicious husbanding of means) man in community provides for his material needs and thus attains self-sufficiency in his physical life. The shared life of the community constitutes essentially the companionship and the communion of the virtue of *friendship* whereby fellowmen reciprocally bear good will and love toward each other. Furthermore, the shared life and tradition of the community make possible the education of the succeeding generations. This assures the continuance of the life of moral virtue as a self-maintaining immanent activity. The courage of the military organization assures the defense of the community against external threat, thus guaranteeing the survival of the community. The *practical wisdom*, sense of justice (*to dikaiton*), equity (*epieikeia*), and good common sense (*gnome*) of the statesmen assure the overall government, distribution of goods, reward and punishment, and harmony and peace of the community as the immanent, communal, rational, moral life of man continually establishing, governing, and perpetuating itself. In this sense, Aristotle holds that man is a social or political being. Outside of the pale of communal life, man will have to be a demigod, or he will lose his humanity and descend to the level of the beast.

To say that man is a political being is not, however, to say that the end of man is external to the individual man, as in the lower beings, where the end of the individual is the perpetuation of the species, usually at the expense of the individual. Precisely because man is rational, the individual man is a species by himself, according to Aristotle. His proper end remains immanent within him. Thus, the communal life of moral virtue of the *polis* is not external to the individual. Since it is essentially a spiritual activity, the shared communal life

is immanent to the individual, and has the good of the individual, as a rational activity, as its proper end.

### The Act of Contemplation

The other end of man is the proper activity and virtue of the speculative intellect. This is the act of contemplation, which Aristotle calls the best and most perfect virtue. The speculative intellect is capable of science (*episteme*) which is the demonstration and derivation of conclusions from first principles. On the other hand, it is also capable of intuition of the fundamental principles (*nous*). But the highest capability of the speculative intellect is a perfect science. This is the possession of the most fundamental principles and their elaborations and derivations, which Aristotle calls philosophy (*philosophia* or at times *sophia* signifying its fulfilled state). Such a perfect science in the concrete consists of contemplating what Aristotle calls the most sublime beings, which would include the eternal heavenly bodies which were considered divine by Greek tradition, but most especially, contemplating the most perfect, most sublime being which is God Himself.

Insofar as God is the most perfect being, there is no potentiality left in Him. He is Pure Act, thus perfect. For Aristotle, He could only be Pure Reason, Pure Thought thinking Itself (*Noesis noeseos*), for any other object outside of the Pure Thought would leave Pure Thought in further potency for it, which then would signify incompleteness or imperfection. Since He is the most pure immanent activity, God does not know anything or anyone besides Himself. He is not a providential God, nor is He seen as Creator or source of the being of the world and of man. He is seen by Aristotle as First Motor, but more in the sense of being the most sublime of beings. He constitutes a point toward which all other beings aspire.

Thus, in contemplation, the most immanent, the most self-sufficient activity man is capable of, man attains the apex of his possibilities. He becomes like God. In other words, for Aristotle, contemplation does not mean an encounter with something or someone beyond man, for that would break the circle of immanence. Rather, contemplation for him is to engage in the highest, most perfect type of reflection, the way it is in God as *noesis noeseos*. Contemplation for Aristotle remains a purely immanent activity, the most immanent man is capable of, which constitutes man's sovereign end and happiness.

Nevertheless, for man to be capable of such an activity, which is really no longer a mere human activity like the moral virtues, Aristotle theorized that over and above man's ordinary human powers and possibilities, and over and above the composition of body and soul, there must be something divine in man which alone is immortal in him, the *nous*. Aristotle, however, left unresolved the question of whether this divine part in man proves individual immortality, or whether it means a kind of ray or participation of the divine in men which is reintegrated in the Godhead at the moment of man's death.

Owing, however, to the frailty of this composite of body, soul and *nous* that is man, the "high's" of contemplation come only as rare brief moments in man's life. Even for the best of men, such moments are not to be expected as everyday happenings. In the concrete, the end of man is mixed. On one hand, there are the rare intense moments of intellectual activity that is divine contemplation, and more commonly, there is the active life of moral virtues and practical wisdom within the context of the communal life of the *polis*.

### **Morality is Human Reasonableness**

We see then that, unlike Plato for whom morality is essentially the soul ordained toward and in quest of the absolute Good transcendent to man, Aristotle sees morality more as an affair of human reasonableness. It is being true to the intrinsic nobility and excellence of one's rational soul. Immorality therefore consists in an activity which is inordinate, excessive, disorderly, unreasonable. And the fault is ultimately traceable to ignorance and error in judgment which make man miss his proper end in life. Such ignorance, of course, may be attributable to man himself for failure to exercise discipline over his lower passions and desires, thereby letting his intellect and judgment be clouded over. Or this ignorance may be due to external factors, such as the lack of necessary natural, social or material conditions.

Having delineated the proper ends and fulfillment of man, Aristotle in the end felt constrained to admit that such noble ends are accessible only to relatively few men. Such ends require necessary conditions which are not given to all. They require a certain natural endowment—normal desires, tendencies and passions which do not unduly distort the higher intellectual part of man, except by the individual's own suffering; and a proper social background that affords man from

early childhood training and education and orientation to his proper ends. They also require a level of material ease and leisure which gives man the opportunity to develop his powers and possibilities. Here we see why Aristotle's ethics eventually turns out to be quite exclusive and aristocratic.

One fundamental characteristic of Aristotle's ethics, which perhaps is shared more or less by the whole ancient Greek tradition, is that man is seen mainly as being his intellect, apart from which there are only blind irrational desires and passions. Consequently, the main problem of morality is invariably seen to be how to discipline the lower desires and passions, and how to educate and cultivate the intellectual part in order to attain man's fulfillment. Without this discipline of the lower desires and the cultivation of the intellectual part, or without the necessary conditions which allow for such discipline and cultivation, the moral end is not attained, whether through the individual's own fault or not. It is this element which gives both Plato's and Aristotle's ethics a certain elitist or aristocratic quality. It is only later with the coming of Christianity that man comes to view himself essentially as will, which is a capacity for freedom, for free choice and for self-determination. This gives morality a deeper dimension and makes it a matter of conscience and good will.

Another point that might be made of Aristotle's ethics is that whereas the Good for Plato signifies a transcendent, other-worldly end of man, for Aristotle the moral end is seen as something immanent in human activity and achievable in life. The twin ends of moral virtues and contemplation signify for Aristotle the achievement of that which is best in man. The moral virtues constitute the fulfillment of the nobility and excellence of the human spirit. Contemplation means not so much the encounter or union with that which is other than man, but rather the fulfillment of the highest potential of man which is his capacity for immanent, self-sufficient activity.<sup>5</sup>

### Study Guide Questions

1. Why does Aristotle say that ethics is not a science, but an art?
2. What does the general concept of "good" mean?
3. What are usually considered "goods" for man?
4. What is meant by the concept *ergon* ?
5. Describe Aristotle's view of human psychology and the different parts of the composite man.

6. What does Aristotle mean by "immanent activity"?
7. Why does Aristotle say that the real man is man's soul?
8. What then is the *ergon* of man for Aristotle?
9. What are the three characteristics of a morally virtuous action for Aristotle?
10. In what sense is practical wisdom, *phronesis*, the master virtue?
11. How are the moral virtues related to the communal life or the *polis*?
12. Besides the moral virtues, what is the other goal or *ergon* of man?
13. In what sense is contemplation the most immanent of human activities?
14. How is contemplation related to God in Aristotle's view?
15. What does immorality consist of for Aristotle?
16. What are the external conditions for morality according to Aristotle? Why are they necessary for moral life?
17. How would you differentiate Aristotle's ethics from that of his teacher Plato?

### **Suggested Assignment**

Write an essay comparing Aristotle's ethics with that of Confucius. Or write an essay showing certain features or aspects of Philippine cultural patterns and practices that seem to parallel Aristotle's doctrine.

## Chapter Five

### Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274)

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS was probably the most prominent theologian and philosopher of the Middle Ages. His genius lies mainly in the manner he mastered Aristotle's philosophical system, whose texts were rediscovered in the Western world in the second half of the twelfth century. The Aristotelian system consisted of a logic, a theory of the natural world, a philosophy of man, an ethics and political theory, and a metaphysics. Aristotle's thought thus formed an elegant, rational system which was totally pagan in its origins, and therefore initially frowned upon by church authorities. They perceived it as a serious threat to Christian thought and wisdom, which admittedly, placed side by side with Aristotle's system, tended to suffer in comparison in terms of rationality and systematic rigor. Thomas, however, appreciated Aristotle's genius and eventually mastered the whole Aristotelian thought from within. Following its spirit and original inspiration, Thomas ended up deepening and transforming it in the process, particularly by complementing it with aspects of Platonic and Neoplatonic thought. In the end, Thomas came up with his own original system, neither simply Aristotelian nor Platonic, which was supple enough to serve for his age and for succeeding ages as the conceptual framework for Christian revelation and theology.

With regard to ethics in particular, Thomas adopted Aristotle's ethics but transformed it by introducing two fundamental notions—the notion of a Creator God, Ground and Source of being of man and of the world, and the notion of *synderesis*, the habit of the first principles of morality, and more specifically, that of conscience.<sup>6</sup> In effect, what Thomas did was to put Aristotle's ethics together with his metaphysics, which in the Stagirite's own writings, as we have seen, were left uncon-

nected to each other. In the hands of Thomas, they were brought together and transformed into a synthetic whole, but only after the metaphysics itself was first complemented and deepened with the Platonic and Neoplatonic notions of participation and human interiority.

Aristotle -

Plato - ideas - ym

### Aristotle's Metaphysics

It might be good for us then to consider at least the main lines of Aristotle's metaphysics in order to be able to appreciate how Thomas went about transforming Aristotle's ethics. Philosophy for Aristotle, or First Philosophy as he would say (later on called Metaphysics by his disciples—that which is beyond or comes after Physics) is primarily the study of being as being, of things insofar as they are (*to on he on*). Aristotle disputes Plato's main contention, that the real true beings are the forms or ideas. On the contrary, Aristotle holds, they are mere abstractions. The real beings are the concrete individual substances (*ousia*) of this world—nonliving substances such as fire, air, water, earth, and living substances, such as plants, animals, and man. A substance, linguistically, is the subject to which predicates are attributed—quality, quantity, relation. For example, the man is clever, the man is huge, the man is your brother. For Aristotle, language is taken as a sufficient indication of how things are in reality. Speaking metaphysically, substance is that which persists in existence through superficial or accidental modifications, for example, a man gaining weight or acquiring a tan after a vacation. A substance, therefore, is a particular this or that something (*tode ti*), not something general or universal (*katholou*), as Plato thought. A substance is an individual being with its own proper existence in which inhere the other modes of being, the accidents such as quality, quantity, relation.

The task of First Philosophy is to study the primary causes and principles of individual substances. To this end, Aristotle evolves his theory of the four causes (matter [*hyle*], form [*morphe*], efficient cause [*aitia*], and final end or purpose [*telos*]). Aristotle had already proposed these causes in his natural philosophy or Physics, but there, he was trying to explain motion in the world. Now he wanted to address himself to the question of why an individual substance exists in this manner or that.

Aristotle approaches the topic by way of the perennial question of the Greeks, namely the question of change. Individual substances obviously undergo change (*kinesis*, *metabole*, *gene-*

sis). They change not only in a superficial, accidental way, but they also experience deep change, whereby nonliving substances, like fire, air, water, earth are transformed from one to the other, and living substances undergo the cycle of generation and corruption, of birth, growth, decline and death. For such changes to be possible, individual substances must be composed of two principles. One is a principle of act (*energeia*), by which a substance has its specific level of existence and unity, and the other is a principle of potency or possibility (*dunamis*), by which a substance is a certain matrix of possibilities to be this or to be that, to have this or that level of perfection. The principle of act of the substance is what Aristotle calls the form (*morphe*), by which the substance undergoing change formerly belonged to one category, such as air for example, and now after the change belongs to another category such as fire. The principle of potency of the substance, Aristotle calls matter (*hyle*), which serves as an underlying subject of change, so that prior to the change, one possibility was actualized, but now after the change, a different possibility or potential is actualized.

Without the principle of matter which is the underlying subject of possibilities, change would only be the instantaneous successive juxtaposition of two or more different substances, not the flow from one substance to another. We could not say in the case of wood burning to ashes that what was formerly the piece of wood is now this pile of ashes. There would simply be some kind of magical substitution—one moment wood, now ashes. On the other hand, without the principle of form, the principle of act which determines the category and level of perfection of the substance, there would be no real change, no passage from one distinct category of substance to another, but simply one static, undifferentiated, amorphous mass of possibilities.

Since change is the passage from what was mere potency or possibility to act, and thus the acquisition of new perfection, change demands the antecedent existence of an efficient cause, which would be in act, at least with regard to the new perfection gained by the substance undergoing change. Otherwise, there would be no change at all since a mere possibility or potency could not very well actualize itself since it is only in potency. A thing could not give to itself what it does not have in the first place. However, Aristotle's efficient causality does not seem to go very far. For he ends up with the sun as the efficient cause of certain meteorological changes and of the growth and decline of living things.

The composite of form and matter is what constitutes the substance's proper essence, that which the substance is, as distinct from other substances. As a specific composite of matter and form, the substance is the source of certain activities specific to it. The specific activities for a plant are nutrition, growth, reproduction. For the animal, they are the senses, capacity for pleasure, certain instinctive tendencies of attraction and repulsion, the capacity to move about, sense memory and imagination. For man they are reason, the speculative and the practical intellect. Every type of specific activity tends toward a specific end, which constitutes the fulfillment of the individual substance. This brings us to Aristotle's fourth type of cause, namely, the final cause.

Aristotle viewed nature not as some kind of a mechanical system but as a kind of organism imbued with an unconscious goal or goals which seek to realize themselves. To be sure, there seems to be no one final end for all levels of substances since each level has its own specific end. Nonetheless, in the hierarchy of living substances (plant, animal, man) the end of the lower level tends toward that of the level above it. The plant through nutrition, growth and reproduction has as a specific end the unfolding and the perpetuation of the species. In so doing, the plant tends to approach the specific end of the animal, which is its fulfillment through sense cognition and sense pleasure. In turn, the animal's specific end tends to approach the specific end of man, which is a higher kind of fulfillment and pleasure in the activities of moral virtue and contemplation. In this sense, the activities tend to be caused by virtue of attraction, and by virtue of final causality, by the higher activities and finality of man. In turn man's specific activities, as we have seen in Aristotle's ethics, are drawn by attraction ultimately by the First Motor, the most perfect being, whose perpetual activity as final end causes the changes and activities of all the rest, directly or indirectly.

As cause of the activities of individual substances, this First Motor must himself be an individual substance. Since he is the ultimate cause, he must himself have no more unactualized potency. He must be Pure Act. Otherwise, we would have to go still beyond the First Motor to a more perfect being who would not need any higher being to actualize any remaining potency. There could be no infinite regression, since otherwise the infinitely regressing chain of final cause and effect would have no final anchoring ground and explanation, and we would be hard put to explain all the specific activities and changes of individual substances that we started with originally.

Since he has no further potency, this perfect being can only be purely immaterial or spiritual. Since he is the most perfect being, his activity can only be the highest activity, that of pure thought. Since any object beyond himself would render him still in further potency, he can only be a thought or intellect thinking itself. He would be God then, the most perfect being, but strangely enough a purely intellectual God. He would be a God who knows only himself and acts on other beings only as final end, serving as some kind of limit point toward which all other beings directly or indirectly approach.

In the end, we see that Aristotle has a loosely unified metaphysics of individual substances, hierarchically ranked according to form of the substances. The substances are linked with one other within each level by virtue of a common form or nature. The lower level of changes may be traced back to the sun as efficient cause. Each level and category of individual substances has its own specific end disparate from the other. However, since each level of specific end tends to approximate the specific end directly above it, eventually, we can trace all specific activities, directly or indirectly to the First Motor, as final end of all.

### Aquinas's Metaphysics

Thomas Aquinas draws this loosely connected system into a more profoundly metaphysical unity by going beyond the Aristotelian question of the formal cause of motion and change. He goes beyond the question of why the individual substance has this specific mode of existence, or this specific set of activities and this specific end, to the more radical question of the cause of the very act of being (*actus essendi*) of the individual substance. Aristotle assumed that the world was eternal in its existence. To the mind of Aristotle, what was to be explained was the cause of the motion and change of individual substances in the world, not the very act of being of the substances and of the world. Thomas deepens Aristotle's theory of act and potency, transforming the investigation of the specific or formal causality of the individual substance to that of the causality of the very act of being of the individual substances and of the world. At the end of this investigation, Thomas arrives at a being who is First Cause, the ultimate efficient cause. He is not only Final End or First Motor but cause of the very being, Creator and Ground of all beings. At the same time He is the Final End of all creation in whom everything

finds fulfillment. He is a being, whose very essence is to be. He is Pure Unlimited Being, Pure Act in contrast with the created beings, which are limited participations of the act of being. They are compositions of existence and limiting essence, and thus are beings only in an analogous sense.

In effect, Thomas borrows the Platonic notion of participation, by which everything is a limited, imperfect participation and imitation of the absolute Good, from which everything emanates or proceeds and to which everything seeks to return. In so doing Thomas is able to conceptualize the notion of a first cause who is not only the cause of motion and acquired perfection in change, but the ground and source and exemplar of all beings in their very being. On the other hand, by maintaining this first principle as first cause in accordance with Aristotle's concept of efficient cause by which there is inherently a discontinuity and disproportion between the cause and the effect, Thomas is able to correct the strong pantheistic undertone of Plato's participation principle, which tended to make everything a necessary emanation and extension of the first principle itself. In Plato and the Neoplatonists, everything seemed ultimately reducible to the one all-encompassing first principle. This withdraws any metaphysical consistency and true causal powers from the pale imitations and participations of the One, the Good.

We see that Thomas followed the path of Aristotle in taking metaphysics as the study of being as being — considering being primarily as the concrete individual substance and investigating its composition and causes, ultimately leading to the question of the ultimate cause. On the other hand, we see Thomas turning profoundly Platonist in viewing the relation between the first cause and its effects not simply as one of causality of motion and change, but one of causality of the act of being itself. It is a relation of participation, by virtue of which all things are viewed as degrees of perfection and being and limited participations of the Pure Act which is the sustaining ground and source of all that is.

As part of this profoundly Platonic inspiration of Thomas, we see him, in the consideration of the transcendental attributes of being, place being directly in relation with the human spirit, which for Plato, of course, signifies essentially the exigency for the absolute. Being, which in Aristotle's approach risks becoming empirical and objectivistic at times, is viewed as the proper object of the human spirit. Hence, being is no longer simply the fact of the individual substance existing in this manner or that, changing and moving, being born, growing.

reproducing and dying, demanding explanation by way of formal, material, efficient and final causes. Being as true is being as intelligible. It is being insofar as it is manifest to the human spirit in the context of the virtual totality. It is being as it conforms to the demands of the human spirit as intellect, as exigency for that which is all and that which is the infinite totality. On the other hand, being as good means being in relation to the human spirit as exigency for the absolute. It is being in the light of that which is the deepest yearning of man as will and in the light of that which man as agent necessarily seeks.

### **The Ethics of St. Thomas**

It is this combination of Aristotelian and Neoplatonic metaphysics which Thomas used as the basis for his ethics. Following the Aristotelian theory of causes, morality consists basically in attaining the goal or the final cause of human nature which is a composition of form and matter whose specific activity is reason. The goal and fulfillment of reason lies in the direction of the moral and intellectual virtues as in Aristotle, although in Thomas, these virtues which are the very ends of morality for Aristotle, are only means to the ultimate, final end of man, which is God Himself.

God, however, is not only the final end, but also the very ground of being of man and of the world. Following the Neoplatonic view, the One God is that of which everything is but a participation and imitation, from whom all things proceed and to whom all things return. The moral end of man is not simply a natural end toward which man by nature tends. It is the Good which man in his innermost being yearns for, made manifest to him in *synderesis* and conscience. Conscience for Thomas is the concrete particular judgment by which, in a given particular situation, man knows what he ought to do. *Synderesis* is more general. It is the intellectual habit or disposition by which man, in any given situation, as reason or spirit and as exigency for the absolute good, is in possession of the fundamental principles of morality. In any experience, therefore, man is in possession of at least the first principles of morality, which is to do good and avoid evil.

Thomas points out that such a fundamental moral principle is epistemologically self-evident on the level of the practical intellect and action in the same manner as the first principles of the speculative intellect are self-evident. These self-evident

principles on the level of knowledge are for example, being is being, a being cannot be and not be at the same time under the same aspect. Insofar as man is will, or an agent necessarily oriented to the Good, the first principle of action or morality is to "Do good and avoid evil." "Act in such a way that you become what your very being demands to be." "Act so that you are true to your being." "Act in such a way that in acting you do not violate your own being." In the concrete context of the human substance and nature, such a fundamental self-evident principle translates itself into precepts regarding human life, sexuality and the family, justice and the community of persons, like "Thou shalt not kill," "thou shalt not commit adultery," "be just, thou shalt not steal."

Morality then is not simply a matter of attaining the end and fulfillment of one's nature. It is a matter of an absolute exigency or demand of the human spirit as manifested in *synderesis* and in conscience. Following Aristotle then, Thomas says that the norm of morality is right reason (*recta ratio*), which is man's rational nature ordained to its final end. Following the Neoplatonic principle, the norm of morality is the Good itself as manifested in *synderesis* and in conscience. In this perspective, morality becomes a matter of absolute obligation rather than merely a question of attaining our natural goals or following our natural tendencies and specific activities to their natural factual end. The principle of following natural tendencies in Aristotle risked turning morality into an affair for a restricted circle of fortunate, properly educated, fulfilled men.

Nonetheless, by retaining the framework of the Aristotelian metaphysics of human nature, and the principle that the Good demanded by the spirit is at the same time the final end of human nature and indeed of all other natures, Thomas is able to keep morality not merely a matter of purely internal conscience, but one of conformity to a universal Natural Law inherent in man's own nature insofar as human nature is necessarily ordained to its final end.<sup>7</sup> Morality then is incumbent on all men, who as individual persons all share a common nature. Furthermore, by virtue of Aristotle's principle of efficient cause, the Good demanded by the exigency of the human spirit is at the same time the First Cause, Pure Act, Creator of all beings. This anchors the absolute demand of the spirit in an absolutely existent or necessary being. The Good, therefore, is that which is demanded by the internal exigency of the human spirit as well as that which is the final end and first cause of all being.

It will be seen then that the Neoplatonic element in the ethics of St. Thomas gives it a deep inner dimension. Whereas a purely Aristotelian metaphysics-based ethics would be essentially a matter of man tending toward and attaining the specific end of his nature, now what is central is the good intention, the properly disposed will and a man with his whole being truly willing the Good in his action, as absolutely demanded in *synderesis* and in conscience. For Thomas, morality is essentially man as will consenting to the innermost demand of his very being, which by the same token is ultimately consenting to the absolute or divine will.

Finally, instead of morality being simply, as in Aristotle, the sense of measure and reasonableness by which man follows the law of his specific immanent activity, which leads him toward fulfillment and happiness, and instead of being merely some kind of *noblesse oblige* fidelity to the worth and excellence of the human soul, Thomas through *synderesis* and conscience turns morality into a matter of absolute obligation vis-a-vis the absolute Good. Ultimately, *synderesis* and conscience are viewed as the expression and resonance in man of this process by which God as the Good, diffusive of itself, is Love, creating man and the world and drawing them all back to Him.

Moral fault, therefore, is not merely a matter of ignorance and error of judgment but sin, the act by which man as will freely chooses a lower or lesser good instead of the absolute Good and thereby degrades his own being, which in its essence is an orientation and vocation to the absolute Good. The moral end is not merely some immanent activity of virtue, as in Aristotle, but virtue is the condition which enables man to tend to his final end. The moral end is not some immanent activity of contemplation nor the immanent perfection consequent upon such activity, but rather the absolute Being and Good Itself, the object of the activity which perfects and achieves the activity. From this presence to man of what is other than and transcendent to him, which Thomas calls *beatific vision*, come true fulfillment, happiness and repose.<sup>8</sup>

### Study Guide Questions

1. Why did Aristotle not integrate his metaphysics with his ethics the way Thomas Aquinas did?
2. What are the two fundamental notions introduced by Aquinas which are not found in Aristotle's ethics?

3. What did Aristotle consider the fundamental real beings in opposition to Plato? Explain.
4. How is the structure of the individual substance reflected in language according to Aristotle?
5. What are the four principles or causes of the individual substance for Aristotle? Explain each.
6. What is Aristotle's reason for concluding that the individual substance must be composed of matter and form?
7. What is the reason for holding that the individual substance must have an efficient cause?
8. What is the reason for holding that the individual substance has a final end or cause?
9. In Aristotle's view, how does God, as First Motor, act on all beings?
10. Explain in what sense Aristotle ends up with a loosely unified metaphysics.
11. Explain the difference between the Aristotelian question of cause of motion and change, and the Thomistic question of the cause of being itself.
12. Explain how the Platonic notion of participation provided Aquinas a way of unifying Aristotle's metaphysics.
13. How does Aquinas use Plato's notion of the soul oriented to the Good to deepen Aristotle's notion of final cause of man?
14. Explain what Aquinas means by *synderesis*. By conscience.
15. It is said that Aquinas used Plato to correct Aristotle and vice versa. Show how Aristotle's notions of efficient and final causes were modified by Plato's notions of participation and soul turned to the Good, and in turn how these two notions of Plato were corrected by Aristotle's notions of efficient and final cause.

### Suggested Assignment

Look for an article or column in a newspaper or magazine showing traces of Aquinas' thought. Copy or reproduce it, and write an analysis of it. Or write an essay showing traces of Aquinas's ethical thought in Philippine traditional morality.

## Chapter Six

### Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)

IMMANUEL KANT lived during the Age of Enlightenment, when Western man, flush with the success of modern experimental science and Newton's physics, felt confident of himself and of his reason. It was a time for rationalists, who held that man has access to knowledge by sheer *a priori* reason, independent of experience and unfalsifiable by experience. It was also a time for empiricists, who held on the other hand that all knowledge stems from sense experience, and that except for logic and mathematics, only statements based on sense experience are considered valid.

#### The Transcendental Method

Kant, however, disagreed with both these schools of thought. He was of the belief that the two of them were really of one piece, differing only in degree, in the sense that both presumed the existence of an object, either a sense object or a spiritual object, independent of and opposite man, and to which man is subject, or more precisely, subjected. Kant's main contention, on the other hand, is that man as reason, as unity of consciousness, as the "I think," is not so much he who is subjected to some object as he who constitutes the subjective conditions which make possible the object of experience. Thus, the Kantian subject is one that "legislates," sets the rules and boundaries for the emergence of the object. This, in general, is what is meant by Kant's "transcendental" method. It views the human subject as that which goes beyond itself and transcends itself to constitute the "conditions of possibility" of the object.

Applied to knowledge, Kant's transcendental method views the human knower both passively and actively. As a being of sense, man is dependent on sense experience. Human knowledge begins with sense experience. Sense experience by itself, however, does not give man knowledge, but only a kind of formless diversity or manifold of sensibility. For this matter of sense experience to become knowledge, it must be received by a series of rational forms coming from the human subject. Human knowledge is composed of matter and a set of forms, matter provided by sense experience which is *a posteriori* (posterior to or dependent on sense experience), and a set of forms coming from the human subject or knower which are *a priori* (prior to or independent of sense experience). These *a priori* forms which are the transcendental conditions of knowledge, are the following:

First, there are the *a priori* forms of space and time. Space and time, for Kant, are not qualities inherent in things as such. They are, rather, part and parcel of man's condition insofar as he is a material or physical being. Thus, things cannot appear to man except in terms of temporal succession and external, spatial relations. This means, therefore, that man can only know things as they appear as *phenomena*, under the conditions of space and time. Man cannot know the things in themselves, independently of space and time. At best, man can think of them as such, as *noumena*.

This is not to say, however, that space and time are mere illusions. They are precisely part of man's concrete empirical condition. The point of Kant is that they are the forms of sensibility characteristic of human knowledge rather than attributes of being and of things in themselves. Man, as corporeal being, is dependent on sense experience. He cannot but view things except under the conditions of exteriority and succession, and as *phenomena*. In contrast, Kant says that from the viewpoint, for example, of a divine intellect, who, as creator, would have knowledge of things from within, things would be known in themselves, independently of the conditions of space and time, as *noumena*.

Second, there are the *a priori* forms of understanding. These are basically the categories and principles which elevate the spatio-temporal sense experience to the level of communicable, objective experience. This function of understanding is seen in the act of judgment or predication, whereby a subject-matter or spatio-temporal sense experience is classified or "categorized." To put it another way, a predicate or category (*kategorien*—to judge, to render visible, to make known) is attributed

of a subject. Thus, before categorization or predication, the spatio-temporal sense experience remains a purely visceral or subjective impression. Upon categorization sense experience attains the level of objectivity or intersubjectivity which is valid for all human subjects.

Third, there are the *a priori* ideas of reason. These are principles of totality, principles of maximum, unconditioned ground, which of themselves transcend our experience, but which, posed by our reason, serve as ideals to regulate knowledge toward greater and greater unity. These ideas of reason are the originating cause or freedom, personal immortality or soul, and God. On the level of theoretical knowledge, these ideas of reason remain purely regulative ideals. But later on, as will be seen, insofar as they are necessarily demanded by morality, they acquire moral or practical certitude.

Finally, there is the transcendental *a priori* unity of consciousness, which unifies the whole rational structure. Kant says that in the end, there must be an overall condition of possibility of experience in general, an underlying *a priori* consciousness, an "I think," to connect all the elements into one coherent unity. Since there is no access to the thing in itself by the transcendental method, Kant instead postulates the transcendental unity of consciousness as the criterion and norm of truth. An experience is ultimately validated and judged to be true insofar as it fits in with all other experiences into one coherent unity of experience and one unity of consciousness.

### Kant's Ethics

Applied to ethics, Kant's transcendental method views man not so much as one who is subject to external impositions coming from some external condition or object, whether such object be pleasure, happiness, some utilitarian advantage or God himself, but rather as a self-governing, rational will, conforming to the peremptory but internal exigencies immanent in himself as rational will.

Kant is, therefore, critical of any "heteronomous" morality, or any morality based on anything outside of or other than the moral subjectivity itself. Thus, a morality founded on God's moral subjectivity itself. Thus, a morality founded on God's Will or authority will not do, unless of course His Will or His Nature, that from which His Will conceptually proceeds, were to be qualified previously by some moral attribute. Otherwise, God Himself could be acting arbitrarily. In this sense, God Himself must do that which is morally good. We cannot, there-

fore, derive our notions of moral good and bad from our belief in God. On the contrary, man arrives at some valid idea of God by way of moral experience, by way of the experience of the demands of morality. Belief in God might very well provide support for a good moral life, but a morality that is primarily based on God's authority is basically arbitrary for Kant. It would be a morality imposing itself on man from without, independently of his immanent sense of what is right and just. It would be an external force rather than as a true moral obligation.

Similarly, Kant rejects a morality based on the theory of the perfection of human nature. The idea of human perfection usually depends on a concept of God's Will or Purpose, and so we find ourselves embroiled once again with the difficulties of a divinely based morality. On the other hand, if we try to determine the idea of perfection of human nature immanently, based on some theory of natural inclination and final end of man, Kant feels this leads us nowhere. We must first have some kind of moral ideal or norm in order to be able to determine man's final end and perfection. Hence, we fall into a circular argument if we use the idea of human perfection to ground morality.

Thirdly, Kant rejects an empirically based morality, which grounds morality on some sense object or experience, such as pleasure, happiness, utilitarian advantage, moral feeling or sympathy. Such an approach reduces morality to a purely contingent and relative affair, depriving it of its universal and obligatory sublimeness.

More positively then, how does Kant view morality?

Starting from the common understanding of morality, relying as he says on what any ordinary man knows, Kant finds that according to common sense there is nothing in this world that can be considered without qualification as morally good except a "good will." Any other thing might be considered as good, such as wealth, power, honor, health, happiness, temperament, intellect, wit, but only conditionally, depending ultimately upon whether they are subordinated to a good will. The good will then is the indispensable condition for something to be morally good. The good will alone seems to constitute that which is good unconditionally. But what then does good will mean exactly? Kant promptly proceeds to unpack the various implications of this common sense notion.

Still relying on this common sense notion of good will which the ordinary man understands and knows in his heart, which needs perhaps only clarification, Kant shows that the will is

considered to be good when it acts so that it conforms itself to what duty demands. Conformity to duty does not mean simply external conformity, but true fidelity to what duty demands.

But what precisely is duty? Duty means that which ought to be done. It signifies a tension that exists in man between what is and what ought to be, between what is demanded by his empirical inclinations and what is demanded by his rational will. A man of good will is therefore one who acts in obedience to duty, not necessarily against his feelings and inclinations (which may or may not be in line with duty). But, whether with or against his feelings and inclinations, man acts in accordance with the demands of his rational will.

### **The Kantian Imperatives**

A duty is a command, an imperative. For a being who is purely a rational will, the exigencies of morality are one with his desires. Morality under such conditions is not experienced as an imperative or duty. But for one who is both rational will and empirical inclinations, such as man, morality takes the form of an imposition, an imperative addressed to a will capable of forsaking its rational calling in favor of the blandishments of purely empirical inclinations. Nonetheless, the origin of the imperative is his own rational will demanding that his empirical or sense inclinations be subordinate to it.

In life, there are duties or imperatives, other than the moral. We must distinguish moral imperatives from these other kinds of imperatives. Kant lists three general types of imperatives: imperatives of skill, imperatives of prudence, and moral imperatives.

Imperatives of skill are the necessary measures or means a man must take to the extent that he chooses to pursue any end or goal. For example, if a man decides to be a physician, it becomes imperative for him to take up medical studies. If a man decides to build a house, it becomes imperative for him to take up the necessary materials and follow certain engineering principles, such as those regarding the solidity of the soil, the strength and tensility of materials, if he wants a structure that will withstand the forces of gravity, wind velocity, earthquake and the like. Such imperatives become incumbent on man only if and when man opts to pursue the end. In this sense, such imperatives are conditional or hypothetical.

Imperatives of prudence are the necessary measures or means that man, out of tact and practicality, must take if he wants to attain happiness, a goal which, in Kant's view, all men as a matter of fact seek by natural inclination. Thus, in view of attaining happiness, a man takes great pains to become a doctor, or architect, or artist, or whatever. If he wants to be happy in life, he knows he must learn to live with others, he must water down his desires. He must be patient. He must be tolerant. Like the imperatives of skill, the imperatives of prudence are likewise conditional or hypothetical, since the actions demanded are conditional upon the further end in view, happiness.

Imperatives of morality, on the other hand, are those which are incumbent upon man by themselves, by virtue of something intrinsic to the nature of the action being commanded, independently of any ulterior end or consequence. Thus, for example, the moral imperative, "Thou shalt not kill," imposes itself, not so much for some optional reason that if you want to have friends you should not be too violent, or for the reason that if you want to stay happy in life you should banish all negative feelings from your mind, but simply because the act of killing one's fellowman is bad, independently of any consequence or advantage that may come out of it. Hence, Kant says, whereas imperatives of skill and of prudence are conditional or hypothetical imperatives, moral imperatives are unconditional or categorical. In this sense, it may also be said that moral imperatives are the only strict commands or imperatives, whereas the other two, owing to their conditional or hypothetical nature, may be called "rules of skill" and "counsels of prudence."

### **The Categorical Imperative**

The question then that immediately comes to mind is how such a categorical imperative can be. Whence does it come? By what authority does it command so unconditionally? Or as Kant would say, what is the condition of possibility of the categorical imperative?

Before we tackle this question, let us try to get a clearer grasp of what the categorical imperative is. For Kant, one essential characteristic of morality is that it is a duty to action, an unconditional, categorical imperative to act. This does not mean, however, that it is a purely formal, empty command. Because it proceeds from the rational will, it cannot be a purely

formal, empty command, which would make it purely arbitrary. Proceeding from the rational will, the categorical imperative is an unconditional exigency of reason. And the one, absolute demand of reason is universality. The hypothetical imperatives are contingent imperatives, relative to and conditional upon ulterior ends and results. A categorical imperative, since it is the unconditional demand of reason itself must be universal and capable of validation in all cases. Hence, as Kant says, one way we can formulate the categorical imperative is by the law of universality—ACT ONLY ON THAT MAXIM THROUGH WHICH YOU CAN AT THE SAME TIME WILL THAT IT SHOULD BECOME A UNIVERSAL LAW. Morality then is essentially an imperative for action capable of universal validation. In other words, my action is moral insofar as I can say that any man in my place should act in the same way.

Another characteristic of the categorical imperative, since it proceeds from the rational will, is that it is premised on man being an end in himself. Since I am a man and a material being in space and time, I am an empirical object subject to the laws of nature and the social environment. But as a rational will, I am also a free, spiritual being, above the determinisms of space and time and above the physical chain of cause and effect. I am capable of positing rational ends or goals for myself, and have the capacity to take up means in pursuit of those ends. Since I am more than a mere material object, I am therefore more than merely a means to some possible technical end in a world of nothing but objects. Since I am a free, spiritual being, in a true sense I constitute a kind of a rupture in that physical chain of cause and effect. I have the freedom to act and to be the cause and origin of a physical chain of cause and effect. By the same token, I have the capacity and the dignity to posit for my action ends or goals that truly issue from me as a rational being. I have the dignity to be the end of my action. In brief, man, as rational will, wills himself as end. Man as a rational being is an end in himself. All other things are means to man as an end. Thus, we can also formulate the categorical imperative in the form of the law of man as an end in himself—ACT IN SUCH A WAY THAT YOU ALWAYS TREAT HUMANITY, WHETHER IN YOUR OWN PERSON OR IN THE PERSON OF ANY OTHER, NEVER SIMPLY AS A MEANS, BUT ALWAYS AT THE SAME TIME AS AN END. Morality is the imperative for action which respects both oneself and the other as befits the dignity of the human person as an end in himself.

A third characteristic of the categorical imperative is that, since it proceeds from the rational will, it is really a univer-

sal law which man, as rational will, legislates himself. Morality is not a matter of rules imposed upon man by some external force or authority. Morality is man himself as rational will acting in conformity with the immanent unconditional exigencies of reason itself, in view of the end or ends as posited or demanded by the same reason. As rational will, then, we can say that man is or should be his own law. Kant calls this the law of autonomy—ACT ALWAYS ON THE MAXIM OF SUCH A WILL IN US AS CAN AT THE SAME TIME LOOK UPON ITSELF AS MAKING UNIVERSAL LAW. Morality, therefore, only demands what man ought to demand of himself and of others as rational will. In this sense, the laws of morality proceed from the very exigencies of man's own reason and from man's very nature as rational will.

Having explored the ramifications of the categorical imperative, we must now go back to our previous question. What is the source and ground of the categorical imperative? What explains its categorical or unconditional nature? By what authority does it command?

Kant's answer is fundamentally that the source and origin of the categorical imperative and thus the ground of morality is man as freedom. Man's dignity as free spiritual being belongs not only to a material world of space and time but primarily to an ideal world in which, as a rational being, man is an end in himself in a community of other ends in themselves. This community is a kingdom of ends, governed by laws which are the very laws of men's being as rational wills.

Freedom for Kant is a necessary implication of the categorical imperative. Governed by the law of universality, man clearly belongs to another world, other than the material world of space and time, where everything is here and now and never offers an experience of the universal. Governed by the law of man as end in himself, man clearly belongs to another world, other than the world of the physical chain of cause and effect, where man as material being is merely an effect of an antecedent physical cause and has no worth except as possible useful means to some possible ulterior technical end. Governed by the law of autonomy, clearly man belongs to another world, other than the material world where man is only the cross-point of different lines of natural forces and subject to the deterministic laws of nature as well as the laws of his impulses, drives, and inclinations.

Man as freedom belongs to an ideal world of reason as well as to an empirical world of physical determinism. This is what makes possible the categorical imperative. This is the ground

of morality. Because man is a free, spiritual being is the ground and reason why he must act according to the law of universality, demanded by his reason as rational will and as free, spiritual being. Because man is a free, spiritual being is the ground and reason why man is an end in himself. His dignity as person, together with the community of other persons, as free, spiritual beings, is the only worthy, obligatory end of man's actions as well as the final end of the whole physical world. Because man is a free, spiritual being is the ground and reason why man must act autonomously, according to universal laws proceeding from his rational will as rational and demanded by his reason.

Be that as it may, the question can be pursued further. What explains the unconditional and categorical nature and the absoluteness of the moral imperative? Man as freedom and as rational will must be consistent and true to himself, and therefore must accord himself with the law of universality, the law of man as end in himself, the law of autonomy. But in the end, this is simply a statement of a logical necessity. Man as free, spiritual being and as rational will, must follow the laws of universality, the kingdom of ends and autonomy, if he is to be consistent with his nature as a free, rational, spiritual being. Would this not in effect make of the categorical imperative a kind of hypothetical imperative? Man must follow the categorical imperative in its various formulations if he is to be true to himself as reason and freedom. It still does not explain the absoluteness, or the categorical, unconditional nature of the imperative. Why must man unconditionally and absolutely be true to himself as reason and freedom? Why should he not perhaps choose to forego his calling as a free, spiritual being in favor of his lower nature?

Kant poses the same problem. As he phrases the question, how can pure reason of itself be practical? In other words, why should rational freedom act in view of positing itself, in view of realizing itself and of being true to itself? Put in more concrete terms, why must man take his existence seriously? Why may he not simply throw all care and caution to the winds, as it were, and live a life of riotous pleasure, egoism, and self-satisfaction? Here, Kant says, we come to the boundary of philosophical reflection. Philosophy can base itself only on human experience and try to unfold its various implications. In moral philosophy we try to unfold the various implications of the categorical imperative, which is the starting given, or fundamental "rational fact" of human experience, as Kant says. He means it is an experience immanent in man's self-aware-

ness as a rational, finite being. But to explain the reason behind this fundamental fact itself, Kant says, is to go beyond our starting premises, and thus beyond the reach of philosophical reflection.

### A Moral World

Kant says that human reason goes into philosophical reflection to find answers to three fundamental questions: What can I know? What ought I to do? What may I hope for? We have already seen how Kant's philosophy tried to answer the first two problems. What remains to be seen is how Kant tackles the third.

What may I hope for? Granting that I do what I ought to do as a moral being in this empirical world as I know it, what is there to hope for? The underlying assumption behind the question is that, from the viewpoint of Kant's system, man finds himself in a dichotomous world. On the one hand, I know a phenomenal world of space and time, governed by the deterministic laws of nature and the laws of opposing social forces, human empirical inclinations, ambitions, passions. On the other hand, morality binds me, by a categorical imperative and an absolute obligation, to live by the moral law which is based on a noumenal, ideal world of a community of human persons who constitute a kingdom of ends in themselves. Hence, the world we live in is a dual world, a world where the morally innocent are often victims of the play of brute physical forces and where the just do not necessarily get what is due them materially. In spite of all that, granting that I live and act by the moral law as commanded by the categorical imperative in this empirical world governed by physical laws and determinisms, is there hope for some ultimate unity that would make sense of this broken, dual world?

Kant says that this third question poses the question of the ultimate unity of all things and the question of the ultimate end toward which all things must be ordained, the "Supreme Good" (*Summum Bonum*). Reduced to simpler terms, the question seems to come down to the question of how or what are the conditions under which the whole empirical world might accord itself with the ends and ideals of the moral world. When we look at the empirical world, Kant says, we do see some forms of an "internal final end" in living, organic beings, where the physical forces do seem to converge toward the immanent unity and life of the live organism. However, such organisms

eventually die, giving way to the operations of the broader, more mechanistic laws of nature as a whole. On the other hand, when we take the empirical world as a whole, Kant does not seem to see any evidence of one ultimate end or purpose governing the operations of the whole empirical world. Rather, what seems evident is a world that is the result of pure chance and the operations of blind, mechanical forces. We could, of course, posit the possibility of some divine intellect at the origin of the whole, empirical world, directing the world in view of some ultimate end or purpose. But Kant feels that such a theory would be purely dogmatic and not substantiated by evidence. All things considered, the facts do not seem to justify the view that all things in the empirical world work toward one systematic end and thus require the existence of some intelligent author. At best, such an argument from design would be a mere speculative theory with no assurance that it is indeed the only possible explanation for the facts.

For Kant, the principle of the solution to the problem lies in the moral imperative itself, for it alone provides us with something in all human experience that is absolutely necessary, though only in a moral sense. Here again, we see Kant's transcendental method in action. The question of the final end of man and of all things cannot be a matter of an end or object annexed or affixed from the outside. It can only be an end that is immanent, emerging as the absolute exigency of reason or of the human spirit itself. We have already seen that there is nothing in the empirical world that necessarily presents itself as the final end or purpose of everything. In all human experience, there is only one thing that presents itself as the necessary final end, namely, man himself as moral being, subject of an absolute, categorical imperative. Man alone, or more exactly, the community of human persons, in their dignity as free, spiritual beings and ends in themselves, are the necessary final ends of all human action and of the empirical world. The necessary end and purpose toward which the whole world of nature and the whole world of man must lead is the absolutely demanded end of morality which is the recognition and the realization of the community of human persons as ends in themselves.

More concretely, the necessary final end and purpose of all things and of all human striving is the realization of a civil society, a state of laws, where each human person is protected in his dignity and freedom as an end in himself and guaranteed access to a minimum of material goods as befits his dignity as a human person. This end can be achieved, of course, not by

means of individual action alone, but by way of communal action, and the historical action of the human community itself, which takes consciousness of itself in its dignity as rational and free, and by the same token, realizes itself as the morally necessary end and purpose for all human striving and for the whole empirical world of nature.

However, even this historical action of the human community, though absolutely demanded by the moral imperative, will not be sufficient by itself to close the dichotomy between the two worlds. Insofar as the final achievement of this historical task lies only in some distant future at the end of a long, historical effort, there must be a future life for man (personal immortality) for this moral historical task to be finally meaningful. Furthermore, Kant says, ultimately there must be a Supreme Being, a Supreme Good, perfect moral Will as well as Omnipotence, Source of all nature, Who provides us the ultimate ground for hoping in the final unity of the demands of morality and the empirical realities of the world of nature.

Since personal immortality and the existence of a Supreme Being are not matters of experience and knowledge, but rather necessary implications demanded by our absolute, categorical moral imperative, Kant calls them moral postulates. Together with freedom, which is the direct implication of the categorical imperative, personal immortality and God comprise the three moral postulates. These are same three regulative ideas of theoretical reason which now acquire moral necessity and certitude through the categorical imperative.

### Summary

According to Kant, then, what can I know? Within the limitations of man's finite knowledge, I can know the phenomenal world circumscribed by the conditions of space and time. What ought I to do? I ought to obey the absolute commands of the categorical imperative in view of the implied noumenal community of human persons of which I am a member. What may I hope for? With faith in man's capacity and freedom to act in the empirical world and in history as demanded by morality, and with faith in the existence of God, Who is all good and the author of all nature, and with faith in personal immortality and a future life, I may hope for a future world of perpetual peace and happiness where, under the spirit of the moral law, a system of just laws will govern relations among men and the use of the goods of nature, and there shall be

a community of freedom and reciprocity which includes all men and all nations.<sup>9</sup>

### Study Guide Questions

1. Explain why Kant sees both the Rationalists and the Empiricists to be really of the same mind.
2. In contrast, what does Kant's *transcendental* method propose in general? What does the term itself, *transcendental*, mean for Kant?
3. What are the three fundamental questions that philosophical reflection seeks to answer, according to Kant?
4. How does Kant show that human knowledge is composed of both active and passive elements?
5. Enumerate the different active elements or transcendental conditions of human knowledge, and explain the function of each.
6. Applied to ethics, what does Kant's transcendental method propose in general?
7. What does Kant mean by "heteronomous" morality?
8. How does the shift to the good will as basis of morality turn morality from "heteronomous" to "autonomous"?
9. What are the three main types of imperatives or duties?
10. What is the essential difference between the moral imperative and the other two?
11. Show how, under the three different modes or formulations of the categorical imperative (universality, man as end in himself, and autonomy), doing one's moral duty is really acting "autonomously," not "heteronomously."
12. Show how for Kant doing one's moral duty is really following the law of universality.
13. Show how doing one's moral duty is respecting man as end in himself.
14. Show how doing one's moral duty is really following the law of one's own being as self-legislator.
15. How does Kant show that freedom is the source and ground of the categorical imperative and thus of morality?
16. Why does Kant say that beyond a certain point, the question of the ground and rationale of the categorical imperative and thus of morality, leads us to the realm of the incomprehensible and the mysterious?
17. Explain why in Kant's view man lives in a dual or dichotomous world.

18. Show how for Kant this dichotomous condition of human existence leads to the question of hope and of the *Summum Bonum*.
19. Why does Kant say that a purely metaphysical or theoretical response to this question would carry no weight?
20. In what sense is the moral end, under human conditions, the only end that could constitute the immanent, absolute end for man?
21. What then is Kant's answer to the third question: What is there to hope for?

### **Suggested Assignment**

Look for a newspaper or magazine article or column showing traces of Kant's influence. Copy or reproduce it, and write an analysis of it.

## Chapter Seven

### Utilitarianism

UNDER THE INFLUENCE of Newton's physics and the general trend of modern experimental science, utilitarianism emerged from a desire to construct a moral theory following the scientific method. Moral theory was to be based on an empirical approach. The method was to avoid purely speculative or metaphysical concepts and right and wrong, good and bad, were to be convertible into concrete verifiable terms which possessed concrete consequences and results such as social and political reform and the betterment and happiness of the human community in general.

#### Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832)

Bentham's interest in ethics was more practical than theoretical. As a critic of law, of the prisons system, and of political institutions, he wanted to develop a moral norm to distinguish good from bad legislation.

For Bentham, man is motivated by two main drives: to seek pleasure and to avoid pain. Pleasure or happiness is not defined by a flight of metaphysical discourse. It is to be taken as common sense would understand it. Pleasure is that pleasantness or feeling of well-being that man derives from activities such as eating and drinking, but also from such activities as reading a book or listening to music.

For Bentham, therefore, "utility" means "that property in any object whereby it tends to produce pleasure, good or happiness to the party whose interest is considered." And the fundamental principle of utility is "the greatest happiness of the greatest number."

In the concrete, Bentham's principle of utility translates itself into a "felicific calculus," or in other words, a way of balancing the pros and the cons of an envisaged act. The morally good act is that which lies at the point of intersection of maximum pleasure and minimum pain.

Assuming then that pleasure is reducible to quantifiable units, Bentham proposes seven elements to be considered in the calculus. They are intensity, duration, probability, and proximity of the pleasure to be derived from the action. Also to be considered are fecundity, or the capacity to engender further pleasures, and purity, or the relative absence of any admixture of painful countereffects. Finally, extent, or the number of people affected, should also go into the balance.

While it is man's end and goal to seek pleasure or happiness, he does not necessarily seek his goal properly. He often seeks pleasure erratically, and he comes to grief and pain instead, or he does not necessarily get the most pleasure that is possible in life.

For example, for his own happiness man must accept that others also seek happiness. "Everybody is to count for one, nobody for more than one." If a man violates this rule, he eventually incurs pain and unhappiness. To help solve this problem, there are several sanctions established to keep the individual from seeking happiness at the expense of others. They are political (arrest, imprisonment), social (public opinion), religious (punishment in an afterlife), or physical (direct consequences of the action in one's own self).

Ethics then for Bentham consists of the method which shows man how to attain pleasure and happiness properly and effectively which is man's fundamental end and goal.<sup>10</sup>

### **John Stuart Mill (1806-1873)**

Mill's father, James Mill, was a fervent disciple of Bentham and accordingly he indoctrinated his son in the principles of Bentham's utilitarianism. At the age of twenty, however, the young Mill went through a kind of mental crisis and eventually saw other things than Bentham's "felicific calculus."

Mill found Bentham's view of human nature too narrow. He proposed that man's end is not mere pleasure and absence of pain, but a more generalized kind of happiness, which is not to be sought for itself but which man attains by seeking some other goal or ideal as an end in itself, such as spiritual perfection, knowledge, aesthetic experience, or creative imagination. In other

words, there are higher and lower pleasures, and qualitatively different kinds of pleasures and satisfactions, contrary to Bentham's merely quantitatively differentiated pleasures. As Mill would say, "it is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be a Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied."

For Mill, however, the ultimate end of all human desires remains happiness. All those lofty ends sought in themselves are at the same time sought as "parts" or "elements" of happiness. In this sense, Mill remains utilitarian, although, happiness for him represents not merely pleasure but ultimately the harmonious development of the human person. Furthermore, the happiness of others must be considered as much as one's own. Man has a social nature which endows him with a desire for unity with his fellowmen, so that he cannot really be happy if others are suffering.

There seems to be an attempt in Mill to broaden utilitarianism. However, in so doing, Mill introduces elements belonging to a more metaphysical theory of human nature, such as his notion of happiness coming from the harmonious development of the human person and that of the social nature of man. These notions may be valid but are hardly reconcilable with utilitarianism's empirical approach.<sup>11</sup>

### **Henry Sidgwick (1838-1900)**

Sidgwick classifies all moral theories into three types. Under "Egoism" or "Psychological Hedonism" are the theories which hold that the good is the greatest happiness of the agent. Under "Intuitionism" are the theories which hold that there are ultimate ends transcending mere utility such as knowledge, virtue, beauty, or ultimate rules such as those of "benevolence" (Seek the good of others as well as one's own) and "equity" (There must be not only maximization of total happiness of the community but a just distribution of happiness, since the good of one is not more important than that of another). Under "Utilitarianism" are the theories which hold that the good is the greatest happiness of all those affected by the act under consideration.

Both Bentham and Mill are classified by Sidgwick as "egoists" or "psychological hedonists" because, although they give regard to the happiness of others. Sidgwick feels that for both of them, the happiness of others is sought only insofar as it will ultimately redound to the individual's own happiness.

Regarding the ultimate ends and rules proposed by "intuitionism," Sidgwick says that such ends and rules are based on intuition, common sense and social tradition. By these ends and rules, certain actions are recognized as belonging to a class of actions which have certain common features and which are "right" and "ought" to be done. However, such ends and rules are vague and eventually run into conflict with one another. Hence, in the end, Sidgwick holds that these ultimate ends and rules must be submitted to the principle of utilitarianism, namely, that the good is that which promotes maximum and distributive general happiness.

Regarding "utilitarianism" or "universal hedonism" to which he subscribes, Sidgwick sees it as arising from both "egoism" and "intuitionism." In a sense, all men do seek their own happiness. However, to achieve his own happiness, the individual must eventually seek the happiness of others. There are also certain actions which, in the light of certain ultimate ends and rules apprehended by intuition and common sense, are recognized as "right" and "ought" to be done. But these ends and rules are quite vague and must eventually be translated in terms of general happiness. Thus, both egoism and intuitionism eventually lead to utilitarianism or universal hedonism, which holds that the good is the happiness of the individual and of the community in general. Sidgwick, however, admits that individual and general happiness are not necessarily reconcilable and that in certain cases, morality demands that the individual sacrifice his individual happiness for the sake of that of the community. Sidgwick sees two possible solutions to this problem of individual sacrifice. One is psychological, namely, to show that the best way to seek one's own happiness is to seek that of others. The second solution is metaphysical, namely, the belief in or the postulate of a God who either in this life or in an afterlife rewards those who sacrifice their own individual happiness for the sake of others.

Within the utilitarian school of thought, Sidgwick and Mill are considered to have paved the way for the shift from "act utilitarianism" to "rule utilitarianism." Act utilitarianism means that the rule of individual and general happiness is applied to the particular act. Considering all the consequences, does a particular act lead to individual and general happiness? The difficulty of such a procedure is that it is difficult, perhaps next to impossible, to calculate and foresee all the consequences of the particular act being considered. "Rule utilitarianism" asks rather whether an act belongs to a type of acts which, by

common experience and tradition, are likely to promote general happiness or its opposite.<sup>12</sup>

### George Edward Moore (1873-1958)

For G. E. Moore, a fundamental notion such as "good" is unanalyzable. It is unexplainable by or underivable from anything outside of the notion itself. We recognize the good by itself, by direct apprehension or intuition. Moore, therefore, rejects as a "natural fallacy" the attempt to identify or define the good by something other than what it is, such as by pleasure or benefit or happiness.

Even if the notion of the good itself is unanalyzable, we can identify certain states of affairs as being good, either in themselves or as means leading to an end which is good. A certain thing or state of affairs is apprehended or intuited as good insofar as it constitutes a certain configuration or logical unity of natural elements. What are good, therefore, are such things as found in the world. But they are good not merely by their physical qualities, but under some formal aspect or order. Moore gives aesthetic enjoyment and personal affection as examples of things which are good in this sense.

Moore is against egoistic utilitarianism, for good is good. It is completely irrelevant to whom the good that is produced by the right act redounds. The interest in one's own good is a natural inclination, but it is not necessarily a moral inclination. For the same reason, Moore is against the principle of the greatest happiness of the greatest number. To do the good is to do the good, regardless of whether it affects ten people or a hundred.

Moore, however, remains a utilitarian. He considers that the act itself is not good or bad, but is merely a means to the end which is good or bad. Thus, he holds that the subjective intention or motive or attitude is irrelevant to the rightness of the act. What determines the rightness of the act is the objective good produced by the act. Moore says that the proposition "I am morally bound to perform this action" is identical to or logically equivalent to "This action will produce the greatest possible amount of good in the universe." To have the intention or motive to serve others may be praiseworthy, but if the act itself objectively causes suffering in the world, then the act is morally wrong.<sup>13</sup>

One basic difficulty intrinsic to the empirical approach of utilitarianism in general is the leap from the fact that man does seek pleasure or happiness to the imperative that he ought to do so. That man in fact desires certain ends is no argument to justify that man ought to desire such ends or ought to act upon such desires. To the extent, therefore, that utilitarianism is merely an empirical psychological description of what man actually does and desires, it hardly explains the problems posed by the moral dimension of human experience, such as for example, why man is morally bound to act or act in such and such a way. On the other hand, to the extent that utilitarianism does try to explain and ground the moral "ought" in some empirical given, it commits what G. E. Moore himself calls the "naturalistic fallacy" of reducing the good and the moral "ought" to something less than it is.

Furthermore, the utilitarian is hard put to define what he means by pleasure or happiness, independently of some metaphysical theory of human nature or of the human person. His empirical approach commits him to an empirical definition of pleasure or happiness as the end of man. Trying, however, to remain faithful to what common sense and moral experience dictate, the utilitarian finds himself eventually forced to go beyond what his method warrants in defining qualitatively higher and lower pleasures or the general notion of human happiness.

Insofar as the utilitarian's objective approach leads him to judge the human act purely by its consequences and results, and to consider the act merely as a means to the end (and the end defined merely in terms of the concrete benefits resulting from the act), this stance leads him toward the position that the end justifies the means. Indeed, for the consistent utilitarian, only the end can justify the means. In other words, human acts, as means, of themselves have no moral status apart from the end, namely, the concrete benefits resulting from the act. This leads to the position that any human act is considered acceptable or justifiable as long as it produces general happiness.

On the other hand, it would seem that a man and his action should be considered good, regardless of the success and ultimate consequences of his action, provided that he means well. To mean well means that in his action he does what he honestly perceives to be the good, and that he takes all available means to find out what the good (what he should do) is. Since man is finite, he does not have the omniscience to foresee all consequences of his actions, nor the omnipotence to have complete control of the worldly conditions and circumstances

under which his action is posited. True, it is in view of such a difficulty that rule utilitarianism has been proposed. But the rules comprehended in rule utilitarianism have to be justifiable by a principle other than the utilitarian's "as that likely to promote general happiness," or else the problem reemerges. What if, for example, the results of the action turn out to be other than what was normally expected by the rule? Would we still consider the act then to be good? By what principle?

One thing, however, that can be said in support of utilitarianism is that the human act does have an objective aspect. Quite apart from the agent's intention or motive, his act can and does objectively promote or do violence to the worth and dignity of the human person or of the human community as a whole. In this sense, aside from the intention of the agent, considerations regarding the objective aspect and probable foreseeable consequences must enter in the judgment regarding the morality of a human act.

### Study Guide Questions

1. How would you characterize the utilitarian moral theory in general? What is its emphasis?
2. What does Bentham mean by "felicitific calculus"?
3. What is meant by "utility"?
4. What are the seven elements to be considered in the calculus?
5. Granted that all men do seek pleasure or happiness, what then does ethics consist of according to Bentham?
6. Why must man take into consideration that the other also seeks happiness?
7. What are the types of sanctions intended to keep man from seeking happiness at the expense of others?
8. How would you differentiate Mill's concept of happiness from that of Bentham?
9. What are some of the "parts" or "elements" of happiness for Mill?
10. What reason does Mill give for holding that man cannot really be happy if others are suffering?
11. How then did Mill enlarge the notion of utilitarianism of Bentham?
12. What does Sidgwick mean by "psychological hedonism"? By "intuitionism"? By "universal hedonism"?
13. Why does Sidgwick say that intuitionism must eventually come down to universal hedonism or utilitarianism?

14. What is the one difficulty that Sidgwick sees in universal hedonism and how does he propose to solve it?
15. What is the difference between *act* and *rule* utilitarianism?
16. What does G.E. Moore mean when he says the "good" is unanalyzable?
17. What quality do states of affairs have which are intuited as good?
18. What does Moore have against egoistic utilitarianism?
19. In the end, what in Moore's thought makes it classifiable under utilitarianism?

### **Suggested Assignment**

Look for a newspaper or magazine article or column which shows traces of utilitarianism. Copy or reproduce it, and write an analysis of it.

## Chapter Eight

# Description of the Moral Dimension

WHAT WE NEED at this point is a description of moral experience or of the moral dimension of human existence. We want to explain what we mean when in daily life we speak of morality, of right and wrong, of the good and the bad, of conscience, moral duty and obligation.

Is there any distinct meaning intended in using "description" rather than the more usual term "definition"? Why not talk of a definition of morality, of the moral dimension, or a definition of good and bad? Of course, we do need in the beginning some initial clarification regarding the lexical or nominal definition of terms. We do need to give synonyms of the term being considered or give terms of equivalent meaning in the language, which we tried to do in the introductory chapter. However, going beyond the purely nominal or lexical definitions, "description" of the moral dimension seems preferable at this point. "Definition" usually involves theoretical implications regarding the nature or essence of the thing being defined. But at this point we want to keep ourselves open as much as possible regarding what is the given, what we have present before us and what we experience, or what we refer to when we talk about morality, before we discuss theoretical explanations and demonstrations. It is true that our descriptions will never be free of all prejudicial theoretical assumptions. Nonetheless, it seems that as a starting point it is good to try to be as open and malleable as we can be, and to look and see what the given really is before we try to theorize regarding its nature, explanation and ground.

Let us then take a closer look at what we usually refer to when we talk of morality. Let us try to understand how those morally related terms, whose lexical meanings we have seen in

the introductory chapter, come together in real life. In the process, we shall try not merely to arrive at lexical definitions of the terms but go to the experiential ground of our moral words and discourse. We would like to come up with those essential elements which are constitutive of the structure of moral experience and which distinguish it from other dimensions of human experience, such as, for example, the aesthetic and the religious. In doing this we hope to describe the moral dimension of human existence.

Morality, as defined in common language, is that aspect of life which has to do with the rightness or wrongness, the goodness or badness, of human action. As we saw in the introductory chapter, these pairs of correlative terms are very often used as equivalents, although in more precise language, rightness and wrongness refer specifically to the binding or obligatory nature of the action, while goodness and badness refer to the action's conformity or nonconformity with some supposed ontological end or goal of man. But, since it is the end which is the norm binding upon man, and what man ought to do is precisely to achieve the end, we shall use these pairs of correlatives as equivalent, unless otherwise indicated.

The most common manifestation of morality lies in the judgments we all make regarding the goodness or badness of certain acts. For example, we judge a policeman who dies coming to the aid of a hold-up victim, or a woman who spends most of her life taking care of the poor and handicapped, or on the other hand, an official in civil authority who tortures political prisoners, or an enterprising operator who corrals young women into prostitution.

Closer to home, there are moral judgments which we sometimes make regarding our own selves and our own acts. These are sometimes referred to as the "voice of conscience," the "feelings of remorse." They are the feelings of not being able to live with oneself, or on the other hand, the sense of deep peace for having done what had to be done despite perhaps the pain and sacrifice involved, or the sense of quiet joy in the knowledge that one has done the right thing although the act might have gone unsung and unappreciated by others.

These judgments are normally not mere manifestations of some psychological quirk or aberration. Admittedly, there could be cases of individuals who because of psychological problems are wont to heap undue condemnation or overesteem on others or on themselves. Nor are these judgments the simple gushing of subjective emotions regarding one's doings. There are certain

actions which of their very nature seem to elicit condemnation and blame or praise and approval, as in the examples we have seen above.

More structurally, let us examine the essential elements or features which characterize and constitute moral experience or the moral dimension of our existence. There seem to be five constitutive elements which form the structure of moral experience, namely, action, freedom, the judgment of goodness or badness, universality, and obligation.

### Action

The moral dimension or moral experience in general reveals man to himself as being under some kind of constant tension between what is at present and what must be in the future, between what he is now and what his being somehow must ultimately be, what his being ought to realize as its proper immanent *telos* or end.

Because there is this tension between what is and what ought to be, morality or man as moral being is, properly speaking, *action*. Action is the moving of oneself and taking concrete means in view of the goal or end, which is not yet but which somehow ought to be. Hence, morality, essentially, is not a set of rules and prohibitions to limit man. Nor is it primarily some kind of theoretical knowledge about man and the world. First and foremost, morality is action, the doing and the realizing of what man ought to be. It is true that this action cannot be purely arbitrary or blind, and that for it to be truly moral, it must somehow be valid action. It must be justifiable, reasoned, and done in the light of truth. But even this light of truth, as we shall see later, does not seem to be the cool, tranquil light of theoretical knowledge preceding the action. It is not something that one possesses for its own sake or something that one possesses whether one acts or not. It is rather a kind of lived truth, a sort of light that goes ahead of itself. It is a kind of knowledge which is not in full possession of itself, but somehow comes only with man's orientation and tendency toward this future end.<sup>14</sup> Hence, the man who is usually looked upon as a morally good man is not necessarily one who has expert knowledge about things, but one who expectedly acts with firmness and constancy according to some kind of lived sense of humanity. It is the lived sense of what man must be, which the ancients called practical wisdom.

Action in general refers to man insofar as he takes up or presents to himself an end or goal. This goal is an envisaged future state of things and includes both himself and the world. In view of this goal he takes up means. He, moves himself, initiates a course of events, or intervenes in the natural course of events, beginning with himself and moving into the outside world toward the attainment of the goal. Insofar as morality is essentially action, it requires man to take the means and to set into motion a course of events, starting from himself and moving into the world, toward what ought to be, toward some future state of being, which eventually includes both himself and the world. This moral end or goal needs to be made more precise, but in any case, morality is primarily man taking up action, doing something, realizing something which ought to be.

### **Freedom**

Morality therefore requires man to act, to realize what he must be and what his very being ought to be. This means that morality addresses man as a being who can truly act, who can truly be the cause, the origin and initiator of action, and in this sense free.<sup>15</sup>

It is under the aspect of morality, therefore, that we see man properly as an "I," as a person, a being who is in some way present to himself. Thus he has awareness and knowledge, and is called to determine and to realize his being. Therefore, man has will and freedom. As person, man has the power to be the origin and to be the self-initiating source of his action. His actions are to a certain extent his own. They are within his control and he is responsible for them.

Man, however, is finite, and so too is his action. Human action can only take place within the context of the concrete embodied individual and the circumstances of the world. Viewed in the concrete, human action means man choosing a concrete goal among the alternatives made possible by the situation. In view of his chosen goal he takes up certain means. He sets into motion a certain course of events, chosen among several possible alternative courses, starting from within himself and his bodily powers and extending to the external world. Thus, man, within his embodied situation, chooses means toward goals. More precisely, man chooses intermediate goals, which in turn are chosen in view of some ultimate moral goal, to which man in his very being is necessarily oriented.

In morality, therefore, freedom means basically freedom of action. This more precisely means, first, freedom of choice of the means, secondly, freedom of choice of intermediate goals, and thirdly, freedom to follow or not man's necessary ultimate end, which whether he chooses it or not, remains his ultimate end to which he is necessarily oriented. As Thomas Aquinas says, man necessarily or naturally tends toward his ultimate end.<sup>16</sup> In this third sense, freedom means not so much the completely free option to take up or leave the end, for there is no other ultimate end, but the freedom of man ultimately to determine himself to be truly man or not.

Viewed in its embodied reality, human action lends itself to the basic distinction, made by traditional moral philosophy, between what are properly speaking *human acts* and *acts of man*. Human acts are voluntary acts, acts that man knowingly and willingly does. They are acts he does freely and for which he is responsible. On the other hand, *acts of man* are acts proceeding from man, but due to lack of knowledge or lack of consent and control, they are involuntary acts. They are not properly speaking human acts, and thus are not imputable to man.

Furthermore, a distinction is made between the *elicited act* and the *commanded act*. The elicited act is the internal aspect of the act which is not vulnerable to the forces of the physical and external world, for example the act of deciding and choosing one's goal. On the other hand the *commanded act* is that aspect of the action which involves man with the outside world, where man somehow takes hold of his physical powers, moves himself, and initiates a chain of cause and effect in the outside world with a view to realizing his intended goal. While the elicited phase of the act remains under the full control of man (a man cannot be forced to will something against his own will), the commanded phase, which has to reckon with physical and external forces endowed with their own proper nature and tendencies, is subject to contingencies not within man's full control. Even without full control, common knowledge of the nature and propensities of these physical and external forces affords man a degree of predictability of the consequences of his acts. But, given the infinite number of physical and external variables, there will always be an element of uncertainty and risk in human action. Hence, with regard to the commanded phase of the act, a man is responsible only for those external aspects within his control and those normally foreseeable consequences of his acts.

## Action as Good or Bad

As we have just seen, morally speaking, the very being of man calls upon him to act in order to realize his *telos*, that which his being can be and ought to be. It is this *telos*, this final end of man, which is somehow referred to when man talks of good and bad.

We have already seen that people make moral judgments regarding one another and themselves. There are actions which are considered good, and others bad. Such judgments are not quite the same as judgments referring to pleasure or practicality or social expediency. There is a big difference in ordinary language between saying that such an action gives us pleasure or pain, or that such an action is efficient or wasteful, or that such an action is socially expedient or unwise and saying that such an action is morally good or bad. One is wont to say that he derives a lot of pleasure drinking a mug or two of ice-cold beer after a hard day's work. Or we often hear it said that it would be more practical and efficient in the long run to divide the work into several components, each to be assigned to a different individual, rather than to let everybody do all things alike, all at the same time. Or there is the saying that it is not very wise or expedient to prove your point and win the argument but lose a friend. But then there is that other type of judgment which says, for example, that the torture of fellow human beings is an immoral, dastardly act.

We also see that the same action could lend itself to all these different types of judgments. The act of cheating in an examination, for example, could lead to different considerations. What pleasure will I get out of it? Putting one over the teacher perhaps and getting away with it? Passing the course without having to labor too much for it? How practical and efficient would cheating be? Could I do it smartly and intelligently so that there is no possibility of being caught? I see all kinds of cheating going on around me, so is it practical that I go on plodding along honestly while my neighbors go their merry cheating way? Granted that I am bright and smart and I do what I see others around me do and I cheat my way through college, getting by without much study, what would that make of me in the long run in view of my career or profession? How expedient and wise would cheating be in case I get caught? As they say, if things can go wrong, they will go wrong. What then if I get caught cheating? What will that do to my self-image? What will people say? How will my parents take it should they find out about it? How will my best friend take it? And then.

of course, there is the moral question. Independently of those other considerations, is the act of cheating in a final examination morally right or wrong, good or bad? What makes it right or wrong, good or bad? If truly wrong and bad, how then could I really bear myself acting so dishonestly? How could I ever accept myself in the light of my being as related to fellowmen? In the light of my conscience? In the light of the ultimate meaning of my existence? In this sense, in the light of all being?

It can be seen that there is a different norm or standard corresponding to each of these judgments. As we have seen in the section on the introductory notions, there is the norm of pleasure and pain which refers to man's physical well-being and man's inclination to physical or sensual satisfaction. There is the norm of efficiency or practicality, which refers to the use of suitable means in view of previously chosen goals or objectives. There is the norm of social expediency which refers to our relations with others and more specifically, to the advantages or disadvantages to be obtained from our social relations.

Finally, there is the moral good and bad. We shall have to go into this in more depth later. For the moment, in this descriptive phase, let it suffice to say that the norm for the judgment on the moral goodness or badness of human action does not refer to some norm which comes from outside, such as some natural or organic or socially-required condition. The norm seems to be something immanent in man himself. It is an ideal vision that man truly and deeply aspires for, which in a sense represents the fulfillment and end of all his yearnings. Thus it is called "the good," that which I, or at least "the better part of me," would really like to do and be. On the other hand, the good does not seem to represent simply a particular good for man. It is not something that he may arbitrarily assume or discard. The good does not seem to represent simply a particular good for me in accordance with my tastes and preferences. This good, as intimated in our moral experience, seems to represent precisely "the good." It is not simply that which will be for my individual pleasure or interest or advantage, but that good which somehow transcends all particular goods. It is the good that must be, the *telos*, the good of my very being as man and the good of all others with whom I share my humanity.

To say, therefore, that a man is morally good or bad is not simply to assert something about his being happy or miserable, bright or dense, successful or unfortunately lost and frustrated. Moral goodness or badness signifies something more profound

and ultimate which concerns the whole point and sense of all existence. Thus, when by remorse of conscience, I know that I have done something bad, something immoral, I am deeply disturbed since I know and feel somehow that by this immoral act I have perverted the whole sense and direction of my existence, at least as of that moment in my life. In this light, the good seems to be some kind of ultimate norm, or some kind of measure of the ultimate meaning and worth of man's existence.

### **Universality**

Universality refers to that aspect of the moral dimension by which man experiences himself as answerable to an end and a norm common to all human beings. Morality orients man towards a certain end and norm and places man in relation to all other human persons. In a sense, to view things morally is to view things in the eyes of all humanity. The moral attitude is the willingness to accept that one is subject to a norm or a rule common to all.

Contrariwise, particularly in our contemporary world, moral visions and moral systems abound, varying from culture to culture and from human group to human group. Such material differences, however, salient as they might be, appear more serious than they really are. If we look at each of these different moral visions and systems from within, we see that each of them invariably has in view the notion of all humanity, and each of them formally holds that the moral ideal and the moral norm are incumbent on all universally.

Because of human limitations, certain specific elements regarding man's self-understanding may vary. The material extension of the concept of "all mankind" may be relatively restricted or open. Thus, an aboriginal tribe, for example, due to isolation, limited knowledge, lack of means of communication and travel, could have a very limited extension for its concept of "all humanity." But formally, because of the moral dimension or the moral structure of human existence, each individual and each human community has a concept of a common humanity which shares a common dignity by virtue of a common moral end and a common moral norm of good and bad. In moral experience, therefore, man invariably sees himself together with his fellow human beings as oriented to one common end and subject to one common, universal norm.

The universal norm, of course, must be applied in the context of the individual's particular, concrete situation. Nonetheless,

each one in his or her particular situation is perceived to be answerable to the one, common, universal norm and end. When in a moral judgment, I come to the conclusion that I ought to do such and such, the implication is that any man in my place ought to act as I now judge I should act, or that any man, knowing the conditions under which I now am, should come to the same judgment as I now make.

In moral experience, then, man experiences himself or herself as being one among many in a community of all human persons. For this reason, equality and justice are the direct corollaries of moral experience. I must respect and recognize the other as a human person like myself. I must render to the other what is his or her due. The moral perspective, of its very nature, is infinitely open and inclusive of any and every human person, placing man in the context of the community of all fellow human beings.

### Obligation

We have seen that the moral structure of human existence calls upon man to act in view of a certain *telos* and in view of "the good," which is not merely a particular good for man, but which seems to present itself as "the good" and the end of all human existence. However, "the good" does not only present itself as being the good for all and universal. It presents itself as universally *binding and obligatory*. In this sense, the *telos* or "the good" has an imperative or binding demand on man so that his being is an "ought-to-be," and an "ought-to-act" in view of the end or "the good." I am, therefore, not at total liberty to take up or forego this ultimate end of man, for there is no other. I am free, of course, to consent or not to this end. But that simply means I am free to determine myself as being truly man or not, and being ultimately good or bad. Nonetheless, I remain obliged vis-a-vis the end, whether I consent to it or not. Hence, in moral experience, man experiences himself somehow necessarily bound and necessarily oriented to this final end, in view of which he ought to act. This sense of being bound or required, beyond mere inclination or preference, to act in view of the necessary ultimate end or "the good" is precisely what is meant by moral obligation.

Obligation, in general, means the state of being bound or required to do or not do something. Obligation signifies some kind of ought or imperative. There are, however, many different types or nuances of obligation by which man may be bound.

There is, first, what we might call "technical" obligation. This refers to the requirement of relating suitable means to chosen ends or goals. Thus, once an engineer has decided to build a bridge, he is obliged or bound to follow a whole set of physical and engineering laws governing building materials and geological formations in the design and in the construction of the bridge. Otherwise it would never hold. Or for example in certain games like chess, there are, at certain moments of the game, "forced" or "obligatory" moves. In other words, if I intend to win at all, given a certain configuration of the pieces, I must move in some specific way. Any other move would mean that I lose the game, or that I will be at a very great disadvantage. Secondly, there is the social obligation. (We are not talking here of moral social obligations which are moral obligations regarding my relation to society or the community.) The social obligation refers to all sorts of things one must do if he or she would like to maintain smooth relations with others or with the group. Thus, for example, one is obliged to greet people on their birth anniversary, to attend social functions, to conform to certain customary practices. Otherwise, he ends up being isolated from and ostracized by society. Thirdly, there is the legal obligation. Usually consequent upon a contract between two parties, the legal obligation requires that an act be done or not done. Otherwise a penalty or some other sanction is imposed by the legal authority. Thus, for example, I must pay the agreed upon monthly installment to the store with which I signed a contract to buy my encyclopedia set on installment. Any undue delay in the installment payments would incur legally sanctioned penalties, such as extra interest imposed or even repossession of the books. Fourthly, there is the religious obligation, by which man feels bound to do or not do certain things by virtue of the relation man is believed to have with God and to the divinely sanctioned church or congregation he belongs to. Thus, there is the duty to pray, to love one another, to attend Mass on Sundays, to fast and abstain on Good Friday.<sup>17</sup>

Lastly, there is moral obligation. Good and bad do not present themselves as free alternatives for man, like choosing to have dessert or not, or choosing to be a nuclear physicist or not. In a sense, to be good is something every man ought to be, not simply for the reason that it will make him happy, or rich, or popular, or self-actualized and fulfilled. I must be good unconditionally, independently of personal inclinations and preferences. It is true that the good seems to represent something that is the fulfillment of my being. It is something

that represents the object of my deepest yearnings. Hence it is "good." Yet, on the other hand, the moral good seems to connote something that goes beyond merely being that which is good for me, or even being that which is good for all. Rather, it seems to signify what I and all other fellow human beings must seek and act upon unconditionally, apart from any advantage or good that I individually or together with my fellow human beings stand to gain by it. In this sense, moral obligation is absolute. In other words, it is absolved of any relation to conditions, terms, or provisos. As one sometimes says in a moral situation, I do this for the principle of the thing, not in view of any interest or gain.

What then is this absolute good, this unconditional *telos* binding on all? What does it signify in the end? What is its nature so that it can demand of us to act unconditionally in view of it? We shall have to face this question again later on. At this point when we are simply trying to describe that which is given in moral experience, we can say that there seems to be no specific object given whose formal structure is clearly delineated. For the moment when we talk of "the good" or the *telos* what is meant is that what is absolutely binding is a certain general direction, a kind of pointing-toward, or a certain orientation toward a horizon that somehow englobes us, rather than a specific object that we can grasp fully, or a specific goal and objective that we can project as a well-conceived, fully controlled target.

As we have already seen, morality is not primarily a kind of theoretical knowledge in full possession of itself. Rather, morality is essentially action, where man is always ahead of himself and turned away from himself toward that which is ahead which is beyond his full grasp and control. Morality then is not just any action. We see a big difference between a purely technical or socially expedient action and moral action. In the former instance, the goal and objective is something conceived and posed by man and thus remains under his control. As Kant would say, such actions are commanded by hypothetical imperatives precisely because they are dependent upon goals that man may either assume or discard. On the other hand, the goal of moral action presents itself as something which ultimately transcends man's grasp and control. On the contrary, it seems to be the moral goal which commands man imperatively and unconditionally.

Hence, man experiences himself in some way related to a kind of order which is not simply of his whim or design, like a set of self-imposed rules or resolutions or a targetted goal

he poses for himself. The moral structure seems to place man vis-a-vis some kind of order of transcendence, something other than man, which is beyond man's pure discretion. It is something that presents itself unconditionally and absolutely.

Granted then that because it is beyond man's full grasp and control, that which binds us unconditionally and absolutely cannot be clearly delineated as a specific object, the question naturally arises how such an undetermined thing or principle can serve as the ground and norm of morality? If only to point toward a certain direction, it would seem that what is required is at least some general idea or framework in function of which we might chart our path toward where we must tend absolutely. Otherwise, we would be left with an absolute obligation to act, but with no effective direction or norm as to where we should go or what we should do. We would thus be left with an empty tautological imperative that we must do absolutely what we must do.

If we consult the way the thinkers of antiquity described moral experience, we find that they experienced man's being as a kind of "in-between" (*metaxu*), situated between the material life of nonrational beings and the spiritual world of reason and the good.<sup>18</sup> This "in-between" is not only in reference to man's natural place in the hierarchy of beings, but more properly, in reference to man's very being as precisely this very tension between the closed existence of an animal, physical, sentient life and the free existence of the spirit open to the *Logos* and to "the good."

It is precisely this structural tension situating him in-between the animals and the gods, as the ancient Greeks would say, that establishes man in his being as man, in whom the *Logos* resides. He is thus "rational animal," being open to the *Logos*, later referred to more precisely as the *nous*. It is this "in-between" nature of man which opens up his being, as it were, freeing him from the enclosed, limited existence of a purely material life and establishing him in his self-determining existence of spiritual freedom. It is this tension of being "in-between" which endows human existence with its moral dynamism. In other words, the ideal of greater and greater life of spiritual freedom presents itself to man as "the good life." It is a desirable, worthy ideal, nay, it is the very fulfillment and end of human existence. The good then seems to present itself as the horizon of spiritual freedom, the ideal of life in the *nous* which represents the fulfillment of man's very being.

Listening to the experience of ancient thinkers, we feel its resonance and corroboration in our own moral experience. The

good, the end toward which man is necessarily oriented, lies on the horizon of spiritual freedom itself, or what we would call today personal existence. To put it in another way, we cannot describe and know "the good" in a purely theoretical way. We can have a practical view of "the good" only as we act and as we tend and strive towards it. We can have a lived, practical knowledge of the good only in terms of our active open being as spiritual freedom or personal existence. We can only know the good as being that which approaches somehow toward the limit and horizon of spiritual freedom. Hence, we seem to have gained, if only a little, some clarity regarding this absolute good and this unconditional ultimate end of man. The good lies in the fulfillment of man's nature as spiritual freedom or personal existence.

At this point we seem to come upon a kind of aporia or perplexity. We seem to be faced with opposing elements in our moral experience. On the one hand, the good seems to present itself as the good for man and the fulfillment of his being as open existence or spiritual freedom. On the other hand, the good presents itself as absolutely obligatory, and imposes itself on man, not merely as the exigency of his being as rational nature, but as something to which man as moral being finds himself subject. It is something which comes from some strange order of transcendence beyond man's mere inclination, demand or option.

But if the good is truly the good for man, how then does it acquire the aspect of something absolutely or unconditionally obligatory? How can that which is man's proper good be anything more than that which man in his freedom takes up and imposes upon himself in fidelity to his own being? On the other hand, if the good indeed is absolutely obligatory, how can it impose itself on man without violating his very being as reason, as spiritual freedom and personal existence? Besides, what does it really mean to have an experience of an unconditional or absolute obligation? How does the experience of such a peremptory demand differ from that of the human spirit's own immanent exigency to be true to itself? We shall have to defer till later the attempt to tackle this difficulty. For the moment, we are simply trying to describe the elements of our moral experience or of the moral structure of human existence as faithfully as we can, avoiding the temptation of simplifying the problem by glossing over one or other of the two opposing terms, and leaving for later the matter of theory and explanation. Let us then at this stage simply register what is given, explore its ramifications, and leave it at that.

## **Study Guide Questions**

1. Can you think of instances when you made moral judgments of others? of yourself? How does moral judgment differ from other types of judgments, such as the technical, the societal, the aesthetic?
2. What are the five structural elements or features of the moral dimension?
3. What is meant by action? In what sense does morality imply action?
4. What is meant by freedom? In what sense does morality imply freedom? What are the three levels of freedom in moral action?
5. What does morally good or bad mean in general?
6. What does universality mean as an element of the moral dimension?
7. In what sense may we say that there is universality in the light of the variances of moral traditions and systems?
8. What does obligation mean as an element of the moral dimension? In what sense is moral obligation absolute?

## **Suggested Assignment**

With the help of other sources and references, write a description of the aesthetic or the religious dimension of human experience, comparing it with the features of the moral dimension.

## Chapter Nine

# Ground and Norm of Morality: Conscience

WE HAVE DESCRIBED moral experience and viewed various past moral theories explaining and grounding the moral dimension of man. We must now reflect for ourselves and ask ourselves what is the origin and norm of morality. What is the standard or measure that makes a good act good and a bad act bad? Why ultimately ought man to be good? In other words, what ultimately is the ground of morality?

We can divide our answer into three parts. Each of them eventually says the same thing. They differ from each other only in emphasis. The norm and ground of morality is, first of all, conscience. Secondly, it is the personal nature of man. Thirdly, it is the Natural Law. The first we shall deal with in this chapter. The other two will be dealt with in the following chapters.

### Conscience as Will Fundamentally Oriented to the Absolute Good

We shall use "conscience" here basically in the sense of St. Thomas Aquinas, but with some modification. Aquinas used the term conscience, first of all, to signify the act of intellectual judgment by which we apply the general principles of morality to the particular situation.<sup>19</sup> In a given situation, man after a process of deliberation comes to the concrete conclusion, "I ought to do this," or else "I ought not to do such and such." On the other hand, Aquinas also had the notion of *synderesis*, which means the habit or disposition of the practical intellect by which, in a given situation, man is in possession of the first

principles of good and bad intuitively. They are underived from any further principle, in the same way that we come to know the first principles of the speculative intellect.<sup>20</sup> In a given situation, man is aware that he must do the good and avoid evil, and he knows at least the general principles regarding what is good and what is bad. Aquinas also had the idea of a deep bond which necessarily binds and orients man to God as his final end, regardless of whether man consents and conforms to this fundamental relationship or not.<sup>21</sup> In a given situation, man is aware of an absolute demand or obligation to do the good and avoid evil, since the good is ultimately God himself who is man's creator and ultimate end.

What follows in this section will not be, strictly speaking, a proof but a further clarification of what we have already seen in the description of moral experience. In a sense, one does not prove anything significant in philosophy. To prove something is basically to derive or to deduce it from a more fundamental principle. But in philosophy, or at least in those parts of philosophy where we deal with fundamental dimensions of man like the good and the ultimate meaning of life, we cannot derive them from something more fundamental still, since they are precisely the most fundamental dimensions of human existence. What we can do at best is to go back (reflect, bend back) to things which we already know from common experience, hoping to see them under a clearer light. This is what is meant by the circular demonstration in philosophy which tries to show or clarify what in a sense we already know pre-reflexively.

When the philosopher does reflect on these fundamental dimensions of man, he can only aspire to recapture what in a true sense any ordinary man already knows. Even when the philosopher does succeed in throwing some reflexive light on the matter at hand, he can only go so far. Beyond that he himself has to go back and rely, like any ordinary man, on the naive, pre-reflexive knowledge regarding these fundamental dimensions of man. For in the very act of reflecting or thinking, the philosopher cannot help but at the same time be ahead of himself by way of "lived assumptions" or "existential postulates." The philosopher's act of reflection never totally catches up with itself and fully possesses or grasps itself in the very act of reflecting. Every time he reflects, he cannot help but be thrust ahead of himself toward something that goes beyond his grasp and control.

Conscience is first of all man as will which is fundamentally oriented to the absolute good. This fundamental orientation

expresses itself in the judgment of moral existence: "Do good and avoid evil."

As will, man is the rational tendency or movement towards some end or goal. Man is not merely a contemplative intellect. Thus, as we have seen in chapter 8, morality is primarily a demand for action which arises from the tension between what man is and what he ought to be. In the moral perspective, being always remains unfinished and still to be acted upon. Man then is will oriented to the good which is the fulfillment of being.

As a rational tendency, the will is of its very nature the rational exigency for the absolute good. We have seen that good for man is not merely this or that particular good, but "the good." Man may try to evade this fundamental orientation of his being to "the good" in favor of some particular good or other, but the fundamental orientation remains and the restlessness of the human spirit continues in the aspiration for the end and the absolute good.

For further clarification beyond what we have already seen in chapter 8 regarding the "good" and absolute obligation, let us try to recall briefly certain points from the philosophy of man.

Man is a personal being, an "I," with intellect and will, capable of knowledge, freedom and self-determination. To put it in other words, the very mode of existence of man, unlike that of a purely material object, is a certain infinite openness, by which man is present to himself and present to the world. Man is thus consciousness, or intellect. He is consciousness of himself and consciousness of the world. This consciousness, however, differs from the consciousness of the animal, which by its activities manifests a form of sense consciousness. Man, as consciousness, has a certain distance and a certain liberty vis-a-vis himself and the world. He is capable of self-determination and capable of action on the world.

As consciousness, or intellect, or knower, man finds himself unlike the lower beings that simply exist in function of a specific world or habitat in which they adapt themselves and maintain their existence. Thus is the "closed" environment or habitat of a piece of rock, of a plant like an orchid clinging to a tree, or of a little crab scurrying over the slimy rocks on the seashore. It is true that man, as a psycho-biological organism, also has a certain specific habitat and occupies a certain level of organic life. But as consciousness and as knower, man, in a true sense, has no specific habitat or world. As knower, he does not merely seek a certain optimum level of equilibrium or ad-

justment with a specific habitat as the lower beings do. It is true that man could not survive without certain material things and a surrounding atmosphere. But as the saying goes, man does not live by bread alone but by the truth. It is not sufficient for man that his particular physical and psychological needs are satisfied. By virtue of that infinite openness that he is, man as knower seeks that which is true. He seeks that which is valid and justifiable, that which is the fact, that which is being itself, over and above the mere satisfaction of his particular needs. In this sense, St. Thomas says that man in some way is everything, *quodammodo omnia*. Man's intellect is the comprehension of all that there is. As a rational nature, he is potentially infinite.<sup>22</sup>

What is true is true whether it serves my needs or not, whether it is to my advantage or to that of any other. What is true is true, objectively. It is being in itself. Of course, man, because he is finite, never has all the truth all at once. But as intellect and knower, he has at least the transcendental idea of what is true absolutely and the exigency for what is absolutely true. In this sense man in the concrete world has access to particular truths. But these particular truths in principle are validly true and justifiable virtually in relation to the totality of all things and of being itself. In this sense, it is said that man is open to a horizon of what is true. Or as it is also said, man's mode of being is openness to being. Thus, for example, in his relation with fellowmen and with the world, there is the paramount exigency for that which is valid in itself and which is objective regardless of individual interests. Thus, there is the demand for open dialogue among men, where the appeal to truth in principle should prevail, rather than the use of violence or the pressure of selfish interests.

Connected with the dimension of man as intellect or knower, but for purposes of analysis and clarification distinguished from it, is the dimension of man as will. The horizon of truth that man is open to, is not merely speculative truth to be contemplated theoretically. It is truth that must eventually be lived, truth that must be acted upon and done and realized. Man as will is an unfinished being oriented to a final end or good that remains to be acted upon and attained. As rational being man is oriented by the very exigency of his rational nature to "the good," the absolute good. In other words, man is oriented to that which is his fulfillment and that which is his good. But the good of man that he must achieve is not simply that which is the fulfillment of some specific nature like the fulfillment of a purebred cow or of a thoroughbred horse. Nor is the good

for man simply some particular human good like pleasure, or wealth, or power, or honor. Over and above these, the good for man transcends any particular good of a particular nature. The good for man as will and as rational tendency is that which is in the light of the very exigency of his open or spiritual or rational nature. It is that which is "the good," good in the light of all being and good absolutely. Here and now, we have no immediate experience of such an absolute good, precisely because it exists in man as a demand or as an exigency of his reason or spirit. In the concrete world therefore, this demand for the absolute good translates itself into concrete particular goods in the light of this exigency for the absolute good. In other words, it translates itself into concrete particular actions which are done in view of the absolute good. They are concrete particular actions done with the will consenting to the fundamental orientation to and exigency for the absolute good. In this sense, we would agree with Kant that there is nothing in this world we say is good without any qualification except the good will.<sup>23</sup>

To express this mode of existence of man by which he is open to truth, good, and being, in contrast with the limited, material existence of the lower beings, thinkers have called man reason, or spirit, or freedom. This open dimension of man is usually not reflexively grasped by man himself in a focused, thematized manner. Yet, man somehow always has a pre-reflexive understanding of it. In some way, he knows it "in his guts." Any ordinary man on the street, so to speak, even without the help of the reflective thought of the philosopher, and at times despite the confusing, convoluted thoughts that the philosopher introduces, has a sure, vital understanding of such experiences. This may be gleaned from common expressions like "calling God to witness to the truth of what I say," which affirms what is true in the light of all being, of absolute being, or "remorse of conscience" regarding something that others may not know but which is obvious in the absolute context of all being. There are other expressions like "the depth and infiniteness of man's aspirations," "the yearning for personal integrity," or "the inherent worth and dignity of man" which express things in view of man's exigency for and orientation to the absolute good.

Just as man's existence is openness to the horizon of what is true absolutely, so man's existence is an openness to that which is good absolutely. In the concrete, these two dimensions of man are really one. The truth for man is that which must be lived, realized, and acted upon, and thus it is good.

And the good for man is that which must be justifiable and true. In this sense, we might say that man's mode of existence is openness to the horizon of the true and the good. But for brevity we say in ethics that man as will is oriented to or open to the horizon of the absolute good.

Reflexively, this fundamental orientation of the will to the absolute good expresses itself in the moral judgment: "Do good and avoid evil." In other words, man, in reflection, becomes aware of being as something to be done, as ought-to-be. So he becomes aware of himself as will or as this rational exigency for or fundamental orientation to the absolute good. He becomes conscious of his being as essentially a moral being or, as an ought-to-act in view of the absolute end. This coming to moral awareness and this grasp of being as ought-to-be, and correlatively of man as ought-to-act, expresses itself in the fundamental judgment of moral existence: "Good must be done." "Do good and avoid evil."

For purposes of clarification, we might draw a parallel here. The judgment of existence is the epistemologically fundamental, self-evident judgment of metaphysics. In this judgment man, in experience and in a concrete encounter with the world, after reflection, becomes aware of himself as intellect and as infinite capacity for being. In the light of this transcendental concept of being he comes to the epistemologically fundamental, grounding, self-evident judgment of existence: "There is." "It exists." In a similar manner, when man encounters the concrete world of inclinations and desires, strivings and actions, he becomes aware after reflection of himself as will and as rational exigency for the absolute good. He comes to the epistemologically fundamental, grounding, self-evident judgment of moral existence: "Good must be done." "Do good and avoid evil."

It will be seen that the judgment "Good must be done" or "Do good and avoid evil" imposes itself as self-justificatory and self-evident in the light of the transcendental concept of the good or, in other words, in the light of man as rational will cognizance of himself as rational will oriented to the good, the judgment of good and bad imposes itself. Just as in metaphysics, the principle of noncontradiction (Being is being) and of the excluded middle (Either being is or is not) are self-justificatory and self-evident, so similarly in ethics the self-justificatory, self-evident principle imposes itself: "Good must be done." "Do good and avoid evil." Potential, unfinished being must be brought to its absolute term. Act in such a way that you do

not contradict your being as this will. Do not contradict this rational demand and exigency and this fundamental orientation to the absolute fulfillment of being, which is the absolute good.

In this sense, therefore, the ground and norm of morality is first and foremost conscience, understood as will. In other words, it is man as rational tendency toward and rational exigency and demand for the absolute good which is expressed in the self-evident judgment of moral existence: "Good must be done." "Do good and avoid evil." From this grounding, self-evident judgment everything else follows in morality.

The question could well be asked why we do not simply say that the ground and norm of morality is the absolute good instead of conscience. The difficulty of such a position is that we do not have a direct grasp of what the absolute good is. We might have a notion of it, as a kind of limit-concept or as an ideal end-point. In this sense, we could perhaps say that human action is oriented toward the horizon of the good. But since we do not have a direct grasp of it, it cannot serve as an effective norm.

What we do have is this reflexive awareness of being a will which is rational tendency toward a certain general sense and direction, toward some final end or fullness of being. This rational exigency for the absolute good is what is meant fundamentally by conscience. Hence, in the face of the concrete world, what we have as norm precisely is this conscience and this will as a rational exigency for the absolute good.<sup>24</sup>

So, we have no experience of the absolute good itself except as exigency. But we do have experience of concrete, particular, practical goods, which emerge in the encounter between the concrete world and the rational exigency or the tending-toward-the-good of the will as conscience. In other words, as we have seen above, these concrete, particular goods are concrete, particular actions done in the light of the absolute good. They are actions done as the will conforms with itself as a rational exigency for and a fundamental orientation to the absolute good. In this sense, we can agree with Kant that the norm of morality is immanent in the will itself.<sup>25</sup>

### **Conscience As Concrete Practical Judgment**

Conscience, in a second sense, means the concrete judgment in view of action, or the concrete practical judgment. It is the conclusion of the process of applying the universal principles of morality to the concrete situation.

We have already seen that, over and above man's inclinations or options, he is structurally oriented to the absolute good. Whether he likes it or not, the very moral structure of man's existence orients him toward a certain sense and direction, toward a certain *telos*. As St. Thomas says, man is necessarily oriented to his final end.<sup>26</sup> This fundamental orientation of man to the good or to his final end, as we have just seen, manifests itself in the fundamental self-evident principle: "Do good and avoid evil."

This fundamental principle of morality to do good and avoid evil has to be translated into more concrete terms in the context of the given situation, if it is to issue properly into action.

First, as we shall see more of in detail with Natural Law, this fundamental principle to do good and avoid evil translates itself more specifically in relation to certain essential elements of the human condition or of human nature. These elements of the human condition are, for example, man's embodied life and its basic necessities and man's fundamental relations as found in the family and the human community. These essential features of the human condition prescribe certain primary principles. These are certain general or typical forms of doing good and avoiding evil such as, for example, respect for human life, regard for and protection of marriage and the family, rendering to a fellowman what is due him, maintenance of social order and the community. Thus from the fundamental command to do good and avoid evil, conscience proceeds to these primary moral principles.

After further reflection, secondary principles proceed from these primary principles either as further conclusions or determinations, from the principles. For example, given the primary principle of respect for human life, what does this injunction mean in the light of our present knowledge of human biology and basic hygiene and sanitation. Or else, the secondary principles proceed by specification. This means certain supplementary rules or measures are adopted in view of the demand of the situation. For example, given the primary principle again of respect for human life in the context of motorcars and other rapid means of land transportation, there is need for a uniform rule that everyone drive on the right-hand side of the road, otherwise there would be chaos and grave danger to human life.

These primary and secondary principles and their further derivations are still not sufficient to determine what one must do in the concrete situation. Since moral action of its very nature is concrete and singular, man's task then is to follow

through these primary and secondary principles to the point of concrete execution. Thus, given the fundamental principle to do good and avoid evil, and given the primary and secondary principles, what must I do here and now in the concrete situation?

For purposes of greater clarity, traditional moral philosophy divides the whole process of action and execution into several phases.

The first phase is called *voluntas* or will. This is the fundamental orientation of man as will toward the absolute good. In this first phase we can include the fundamental principle of doing good and avoiding evil and the primary and secondary moral principles.

The second phase is what is called *intentio* or intention, which means the act of viewing the good as concretely achievable in terms of concrete alternative intermediate or proximate ends and concrete alternative means leading to the final end.

The third phase is *consilium* or counsel, which means deliberation. Man considers the different possible proximate ends and then the different alternative paths or means to the chosen end. He considers the probable consequences of each alternative path and weighs them one against the other to find out a good if not the best path.

Fourth is the phase of *consensus* or consent, which means that man says "yes" to the situation. In other words, he takes responsibility for his place in the situation. The process of deliberation, which as a purely intellectual exercise would be more akin to a theoretical puzzle of looking for the optimal or critical path, becomes an existential task whose issue is serious and important.

Fifth is the phase of *sententia* or judgment, which means the concrete concluding judgment: "I ought to do this" or "I ought not to do that." This final concrete judgment of how I must act or what I must do in view of the good is also called *practical* judgment. This is what is properly called conscience in its secondary sense.

The sixth phase is *electio* or the judgment of election or choice. Given the judgment of conscience (the fifth phase) which in the concrete situation is the good that must be done (or the evil that must be avoided), man now must decide or elect whether to follow his conscience or not, and whether to do good or not.

The seventh phase is *imperium* or the commanded act. In other words, having elected what to do, whether to do what is good or not, as manifested in the judgment of conscience, man

now, properly speaking, acts. He moves, setting into motion a chain of cause and effect, starting from within him and his physical powers and extending to the external world.

It will be seen how closely intertwined the intellect and the will are as we go through the different phases of action. *Voluntas*, of course, refers more to the will's fundamental orientation to the good. *Intentio* again is more of an act of the will. It disposes the self to view in terms of possible concrete proximate ends and means the general orientation toward the good. *Consilium* is more of an intellectual act weighing the different possibilities. *Consensus* is more of a will-act where the agent consents to and takes his responsibility in the situation. *Sententia* or the practical judgment of conscience is more of an intellectual act judging what I ought or ought not to do. *Electio* is more of a will-act deciding whether to follow the intellectual judgment of conscience or not. *Imperium*, of course, is more of an act of the will. It moves the self and sets into motion the concrete action. One notices also that these phases of action are not solely temporal phases. As will be seen upon closer scrutiny, at least some of them structurally cut across and permeate the whole process of action, such as *voluntas* and *consensus*.

Let us take a hypothetical example. Consider a man alone on a beach who sees someone out in the water drowning, calling for help. The mental process does not necessarily take long, but the steps follow as described above.

At the start, he has like everybody else a certain general orientation to the good and the awareness of the fundamental principle: "Do good and avoid evil." He is also in possession of the primary principles, such as "respect of fellowman" and "respect of human life." Furthermore, he knows certain secondary principles. In this case, he has knowledge of the requirements and conditions of human life and, thus, awareness of the serious threat drowning would pose to human life. With all of these principles as part of his outlook—the fundamental principle to do good and avoid evil, and the primary and secondary principles—he faces the concrete situation.

Now he considers the alternatives offered by the situation. He could run to seek help, but that would probably take too much time. He could dive in the water to rescue the drowning man. (The situation would be different, of course, if he did not know how to swim. In that case, the possible alternatives would naturally be different.) At the end of the deliberation, he comes to the conclusion that, given the situation at hand, the only real chance the drowning man has is if someone here

and now were to swim to his rescue. Consenting to and espousing the situation as his own, he finally comes to the conclusion: I ought to jump in to save the man. This concrete particular judgment, as we have already seen, indicating what I must do in the concrete situation, is conscience as concrete practical judgment. The man then decides whether he will follow his conscience or not.

Let us say he decides he will jump into the water in order to save the man or, perhaps out of cowardice or over-attachment to himself and his comfort, he decides that he will not do it. He will not follow his conscience. Instead, he will go to call for help, that is an alternative which he himself in conscience has judged as not being an adequate option. Beyond this decision of election, the man therefore sets himself into motion, either jumping into the water to save the drowning man, or moving away from the drowning man crying for help, in order supposedly to seek assistance from others. That is an alternative, however, which he himself in his conscience has judged as not being an adequate response to the situation and therefore bad.

In this light, it will be seen that the norm of morality in the concrete situation is the practical judgment of conscience. In the concrete situation this concrete judgment of conscience ultimately represents the good to be done or the evil to be avoided and the rational exigency for the absolute good come to concretion in the world.

The concrete practical judgment of conscience, precisely because it involves the application of general moral principles to the concrete situation, could possibly be erroneous, due to misjudgment regarding the situation or misinterpretation of the moral principles. Nonetheless, in the concrete situation, having gone through the process of application we have just described, man in the end perceives the good as it is indicated in the concrete judgment of conscience. Thus, this concrete judgment of conscience remains obligatory for him. It remains the norm of morality for the concrete situation.

It will be seen, then, that the sense of erroneousness comes only by a subsequent judgment of conscience after the act. Or it is external to the act and posed as a judgment by one other than the man acting. Of course, if such considered views of another, disputing the practical judgment of the agent, are made known to him prior to his action, he is dutybound in view of the good to consider such serious views as part of his own deliberation. But in the end, having deliberated over all the pertinent aspects presented to him in the situation, it will still

be the concluding concrete practical judgment of his conscience that will be the guiding light and concrete norm of his action. Hence, in the concrete situation, the concrete practical judgment of conscience remains the norm, representing the existential good which is the good that here and now I must do in view of the absolute good.

### **Conscience in Crisis**

We have seen conscience as the fundamental orientation of man to the absolute good. We have also seen conscience as concrete practical judgment in the situation. Now we have to view conscience in its dynamic aspect.

Conscience, as we have already seen, primarily is man's fundamental orientation or openness to the good. While this fundamental orientation is a permanent structural dimension of human existence, it nonetheless undergoes modal change.

We have already seen that conscience as fundamental openness to the good eventually expresses itself in the fundamental self-grounding, self-evident judgment of moral existence: "Good must be done." "Do good and avoid evil." As we shall see in more detail in the chapter on the Natural Law, this fundamental principle of moral existence, taken in the context of human nature, translates itself into certain primary moral principles regarding human life, sexuality and the family, the dignity of the individual and the community of persons.

In the course of man's personal and social life, these primary moral principles develop into a body of moral convictions and judgments, partly as a result of past personal reflections and choices, and partly as a result of past communal choices institutionalized and passed on in tradition. Taken as a whole, this body of moral convictions and judgments serves as a stable framework for daily moral life and action and providing man a sense of mooring and direction. Man thus acquires a certain moral character and life-style, partly due to his personal reflections and choices, and partly due to the moral tradition and institutions of his community.

Normally, as man goes through his daily life, he makes the usual judgments of conscience flowing from his moral character and life-style. They are the combined product, as we have seen, of past personal reflections and decisions and of the community's moral traditions and institutions.

Now and then, however, there are moments in the course of life when, in the midst of the moral trend and style that life

has gradually assumed, something occurs out of character, as if out of nowhere. It is an event or an insight into some good that ought to be done, and therefore a judgment of conscience, but it is out of character with the moral habits of judgment and action our life has settled into. It constitutes a kind of rupture in the consistency of our existence, and somehow disturbs the course that our life has taken till then.

What is characteristic of this type of event in our moral life is that on its occasion which is prompted either by some development in our communal existence or in our personal life, we seem to come upon a sudden inspired insight into the good. It is unexpected and unbidden, like an unexplained grace out of nowhere. It is as if the horizon of the good suddenly takes on a new light, as when a shaft of sunlight breaks through thick clouds. It hits us like a flash of lightning out of nowhere. There we are all of a sudden face to face with the good that up till now our past perception has somehow missed. As if out of the blue, gratuitously, unbidden, a sudden flash of realization, comes to a man.

The interest that such an experience has for us lies in the fact that it constitutes a rupture of the continuity and character that our moral life has assumed. It comes as a disturbing moment. It disturbs habits we have acquired—habits of derivation from the moral principles, habits of judgment, habits of decision, habits of action. Yet for that given moment, this singular judgment-event in all its strangeness and suddenness peremptorily presents the good that must be done.

Let us take an example or two. A husband and wife and their four growing children live a life of fidelity and love. Into their placid lives comes an encounter with an abandoned infant which presents the possibility of adoption. Or consider the case of a man who has grown up wholesomely in a social background that has firmly inculcated in him certain basic moral principles regarding the dignity of the human person, the principle of justice, rendering to the other what is his due, and the inviolability of certain individual rights like life, freedom, property. In the midst of such a life of moral uprightness and integrity, the realization comes suddenly of the reality of widespread dehumanizing poverty in the country, and of unjust social structures. These suggest to him a more demanding concept of social justice and social responsibility which jar old moral habits of discernment and action.

In cases such as these, conscience seems to be divided within itself and caught in a crisis. Based on the premises and the developed habits of interpreting and applying them, conscience

comes to a judgment of what is to be done. However, quite apart from and beyond these premises, conscience comes to another judgment of what ought to be done.

What is particularly embarrassing about this phenomenon is that we would normally arrive at a practical judgment of conscience, as we have already seen, by way of a process of derivation from and application of the fundamental moral principles. This process of derivation and application over time has become a habitual disposition. It has become like second nature to us. On the other hand, this new experience of conscience presents itself as an event which is a leap in the process. It is a judgment which does not seem to stem from the premises. On the contrary it seems to be something which goes beyond them. It is unsubsumable and tends to put into question these premises themselves.

This judgment-event, of course, has to be settled eventually one way or the other. For conscience to act while in such a divided state would be a reckless, mindless attitude in view of the good. Hence, either this judgment-event has to be integrated somehow with our basic moral principles, or else, it must be considered something of an irrational leap and an unfounded insight that deserves to be dismissed forthwith.

The problem, however, is that on the one hand, the judgment-event presents itself as an imperative. The good must be done. Yet on the other hand, the same judgment-event seems to go beyond if not against the first principles of morality. Thus, we call such a judgment-event a moment of crisis of conscience. How do we go about understanding this strange judgment-event? How do we solve the crisis?<sup>27</sup>

The principle of the solution lies in a dialectic approach, by which the judgment-event, a seemingly unique and paradigm-breaking presentation of the good to be done, puts into question, not so much the premises as a certain interpretation of the premises. What the crisis then demands is a retaking to heart, a reinterpretation of the premises. If we reinterpret the premises, the fundamental orientation or openness to the good suffers a distinct broadening which results in a more generous, and more exigent understanding of the principles, under which the judgment-event may now be viewed as legitimately subsumed.

Normally, conscience arrives at the concrete practical judgment by the usual process of derivation and application of fundamental principles. However, extraordinarily, at certain critical moments, conscience proceeds in a more dialectic way. It leaps, as it were, to a stance which at first seems to oppose the premises, but which is really a demand for a purification

of heart, as it were, and a reinterpretation of the moral principles which leads to a "change of heart," and a *metanoia*, or a "conversion." Afterwards, having gained a deeper and more exigent grasp of the fundamental moral principles, conscience may again proceed according to the normal process of derivation and application.

What this judgment-event demands of us, therefore, is a self-critical and generous attitude vis-a-vis our past moral judgments and decisions. It puts into question important elements, if not the whole of our moral character of life-style, which is made up, as we saw, of both personal and social elements, our past personal reflections and choices, and our social moral traditions and institutionalized convictions.

To gain a proper understanding of this judgment-event, we must exert every effort to consider it in the light of our fundamental orientation to the absolute good. We must consider the judgment-event in view of the good to be done, the good that is not yet. Past personal and social judgments and convictions serve as tentative guidelines. But there must be a look forward toward the future good to be done.

This is not to say that the judgment-event is a purely irrational or voluntaristic act. It is to say that the structure of moral existence is such that, essentially, moral truth is the lived truth that comes with the forward direction of the will oriented to the absolute good. Hence, the norm at bottom remains conscience or man as will, as rational tendency, and rational exigency for the absolute good. But if that is true, we see that moral truth is not the theoretical truth of some totally self-present, self-possessed ego. The absolute good is not something we possess and dominate. It is something that always lies beyond our control and yet beckons to us as our fulfillment and *telos*. In our moral reflection and action, we have to entrust ourselves to this forward movement of the good, for it seems to lie beyond us. It is beyond our complete understanding and beyond our full grasp and control, yet it has a peremptory claim on us. As Kant would say, a certain act of practical postulation is required. In the context of the given world and in the context of our old ways and habits, a certain act of faith is needed. To believe in the good is not a mere illusion. Otherwise, the whole moral dynamism would be truncated and stilled.

We may, of course, decide instead against this judgment-event or this inspired insight into the good to be done. We could choose to hold on to our old interpretation of the moral principles and self-contentedly justify our dismissing the

judgment-event as some will-o-the wisp without merit or foundation. This means that we remain in our old ways of going about doing the good according on a certain level in accordance with the moral character and style we have up to now acquired. On the other hand, if we respond to the challenge of the good to be done presented in the judgment-event, we humbly reconsider our past manner of assuming and interpreting the moral principles. We truly take or retake them to heart. In effect we open ourselves more generously to the horizon of the good and reexamine our old ways of discerning and acting. In so doing, we experience a quantum leap, so to speak. We are moved on to an emergent new moral level in our way of life.<sup>28</sup>

There are quite a few important points brought out by this judgment-event or crisis of conscience. First, in conscience we see a subtle interplay between the intellect and the will. From the possible proximate ends and means the intellect manifests the concrete good the will must do in view of the absolute good. On the other hand, the will has a subtle but real influence over the intellect in opening up or narrowing the scope of vision, thereby predisposing man to be more or less sensitive to the good or to the greater good. As Plato and Aristotle have said, it takes a good man to know what is good.<sup>29</sup> In a sense we see what we are predisposed and have predisposed ourselves to see. Because our moral character is the cumulative result of past personal and social discernments, decisions and actions, it has a sharpening or dulling effect on our subsequent judgments of conscience.

Second, conscience ordinarily moves by a process of derivation and application of the moral principles as we understand them. But in moments of crisis, conscience proceeds dialectically. A new insight into the good betokens a new grasp of the moral principles, leading man to a new, higher level of moral life which is more exigent and more generous.

Third, while it is true that man as conscience is structurally oriented to the good, it is also true that conscience grows more sensitive or more dull, becoming more or less exigent, more or less faithful to the good. Hence, morality is not just a matter of good and bad. It is also the demand to be better, to be more and more responsive to the good.

Fourth, morality is not primarily theoretical knowledge of the good in full possession of itself and of the good, but practical knowledge which is always ahead of itself in anticipation of the good that ought to be. Hence it has to trust that which is still to be, that which is the future. That future is not merely the

logical unfolding or projection of our own intellect and will, but that which eventually lies beyond our total grasp, constantly opening us and drawing us out of ourselves toward the absolute good.

Fifth, morality is primarily action. It is the doing, the realization of the good which is not yet. Hence, it is not the mere conformity to ready-made and established rules and requirements, the little do's and the don't's of life. It is essentially the doing of that which is emergently new and creative, in view of bringing being to term and fulfillment, as demanded by the very exigency of man's being as rational will.

### Study Guide Questions

1. What do you understand by man as "openness to the horizon of the true"? As "openness to the horizon of the good"?
2. Explain how man, in reflection, becomes aware of himself as orientation to the good, and how this leads to the self-evident moral principle: "Do good and avoid evil."
3. What then is conscience in general? In what sense is it the ground and norm of morality?
4. What does conscience mean in a secondary sense?
5. Why must man translate the fundamental principle (do good and avoid evil) into more concrete terms?
6. Explain what is meant by the "primary and secondary principles of moral law."
7. Explain the different phases of conscience taken in the secondary sense: *voluntas*, *intentio*, *consilium*, *consensus*, *sententia*, *electio*, and *imperium*.
8. Show how *sententia* is the norm of morality in the concrete.
9. Show how the intellect and the will are closely related through the different phases of conscience.
10. What is the third sense in which we take conscience?
11. What is meant by the "body of moral convictions and judgments forming our moral character and life-style"?
12. What is meant by a "judgment-event"?
13. In what sense does the judgment-event constitute a crisis of conscience?
14. How does the judgment-event differ from the normal judgment of conscience?
15. How is the crisis of conscience posed by the judgment-event eventually resolved?
16. In what sense is the judgment-event an invitation to greater openness and generosity?

17. How does conscience in this third sense differ from conscience taken in the first sense, as man structurally oriented to the good?
18. Explain the flow from conscience as structural orientation to the good, to conscience as concrete practical judgment, to conscience as judgment-event.

### **Suggested Assignment**

Write an essay about different expressions about conscience you meet in daily life, such as "man of conscience," "freedom of conscience," "guilty conscience," "qualms of conscience." Explain what these expressions usually mean and relate them to the three levels of conscience we have seen in this chapter.

## Chapter Ten

# **Norm of Morality: The Personal Nature and Dignity of Man**

### **The Personal Nature and Dignity of Man**

WE HAVE ALREADY SEEN in the previous chapter that the ground and norm of morality is basically conscience or man as will fundamentally open or oriented to the absolute good, as expressed in the moral judgment: "Good must be done." "Do good and avoid evil." We see, however, that man is not pure consciousness and will open to or oriented to the good. In his being will and open to the good, he is at the same time a set of stable structures. In this sense he has a certain nature. Viewed more concretely then, the norm of morality is man as person and nature.

### **Man as Person**

As we have seen in the description of moral experience, man's mode of being is, as the ancients have said, some kind of an "in-between" existence. It is his being in this tension situating him in between the closedness of a purely material level of existence and the openness of a purely spiritual existence which establishes him as a moral being. Furthermore, we saw in the previous chapter in reference to what was seen in the philosophy of man, that man's relatedness to the true and the good establishes man's being as a certain fundamental freedom. It is an infinite openness by which he is aware of himself and of the world, and by which he enjoys a certain distance vis-a-vis himself and vis-a-vis the world. Therefore, he has freedom of choice and action regarding himself and the world. He is self-consciousness and consciousness of the world in the

light of truth. He is freedom of self-determination and action in the light of the good. As demanded by the rational exigency of his being, he is oriented to the true and the good, to the true that must be lived and acted upon and therefore good, and to the good that must be truly valid. It is in this sense that man is said to be a person, a being with intellect and will who is responsible for himself and for the world.

Hence, it will be seen that it is man's openness to the true and the good which establishes him as a person. It is this fundamental relatedness to the true and the good, this rational exigency for that which in a sense is everything and for that which is the term and end of all being, which opens up man's being and establishes him as a person. Free from the limited, enclosed existence of a purely material being, he is raised to a position of paramount dignity vis-a-vis the rest of the cosmos or the universe.

### **Man as Human Nature**

It will also be seen that man's personal being, as openness or orientedness to the true and the good, constitutes at the same time a stable, enduring structure, independently of his choice or caprice. He may or may not respond to the exigencies of the true and the good. Nonetheless, his fundamental orientation and the rational exigency and demand for the true and the good remains.

Secondly, the dignity of an open, free, personal existence endowed on man by his structural relatedness to the true and the good is a dignity which he shares with other human beings, since the structure of orientation or openness to the true and the good is something he has in common with others. It is common not only in the sense that each one of us has a structural orientation to the true and the good. But each one of us is open to the horizon of the true and the good only by way of our structural link of social communication and common action in the community. To put it more concretely, it is only by way of participation in the social and cultural life of the community that the individual comes to the openness of the horizon of the true and the good. It is only in the midst of the existential communication and collaboration of communal life that man accedes to the openness of personal existence. By existential communication and collaboration, is meant that social aspect, over and above the mere physical and instrumen-

tal exchanges of communal life, whereby fellowmen come into awareness and possession of their proper "I's," their proper selves as well as reciprocal awareness of one another. By the same token they come to awareness of their being as an orientation to the true and the good.

To have stable structures and relationships is to have a certain nature. Thus, man has a certain nature by which he is structurally related to the horizon of the true and the good as well as to the community of other persons and to other beings similarly open to or oriented to the true and the good. Being a person means being a member of a community of persons all commonly ordained to the true and the good.

We have to go even further and say that there is an intimate link between these two natural or structural relationships of man, the orientation to the true and the good, and the communal bond with fellow human beings or co-persons.

As we have already seen, it is man's orientation to the true and the good which establishes him in his personal existence as openness and freedom. However, the true and the good are not external goals of man. They are the immanent rational exigencies of man's very being. They represent the fulfillment of man's rational or spiritual being and of man's personal existence. Furthermore, such fulfillment or end is not merely some particular end or a good of some particular nature. As demanded by the rational exigency of man's being as reason and as intellect and will, such an end or goal represents an absolute good. It is the demanded term and fulfillment of being itself. Translated in more concrete terms, the end or the absolute good seems to lie in the direction of the fulfillment of communal personal existence. It lies toward the direction of maximum communication and reciprocal recognition among the totality of persons.

Hence, in fidelity to the absolute end or good, I must act not just for my good or any particular good, but for that which is the good of all and, the good of the totality of the community of persons. I must accept and affirm each and every human person as my fellowman and as my equal. We are equal not in the sense that we are all collectively one like a colony of termites, or all similar like wild yellow flowers strewn over a summer meadow. Rather, we are all equal in the sense that each one of us is a moral conscience, a unique "I." Each one of us is a free, unique self constituted and addressed in his unique personality by the horizon of the absolute good. We are all equal in the sense that we are addressed by the absolute

good by way of the traditional communication and common life of the community.<sup>30</sup> To repeat then, in fidelity to the absolute good, I must act in respect of and toward the realization of the spiritual freedom and dignity of every human being. I must act toward the maximum communication and the reciprocal recognition and affirmation among the totality of persons.

On the other hand, if we are truly to respect and affirm the other person as another self, as another spiritual freedom oriented to the absolute good and as another self-determining, responsible "I," we must at the same time go beyond our individual differences toward that horizon of the absolute good, in relation to which we all find ourselves constituted and claimed by some absolute demand. It is only in the perspective of this absolute good or *telos*, which no one person possesses or dominates and which transcends all of us, that we can truly respect one another's spiritual freedom as persons. Hence, a true relationship among persons cannot be a purely interpersonal relationship among the persons concerned. If we, in our relating with others, do not at the same time recognize and affirm the horizon of the absolute good which transcends our individualities, our relationship eventually degenerates into some form or other of subject-object, master-slave, possessor-possessed, or dominant-subordinate relationship.

Hence, to do the good is eventually to recognize and to affirm the spiritual freedom and dignity of the totality of the community of persons. On the other hand, to respect and to affirm the spiritual freedom and dignity of the other person is to go beyond, even to the horizon of the absolute good. Or to state it negatively, to go against the absolute demand of the good is eventually to break that bond we have with our co-persons. To violate the freedom and the dignity of my neighbor is ultimately to spurn that openness and orientedness to the absolute good by which and in which my neighbor's personal self and my own are constituted and grounded.

Thirdly, apart from the orientation to the absolute good and the relation to his co-persons, man has a structural relationship which binds him to the physical world. As has been seen in the philosophy of man, man is an embodied consciousness. This relationship with the physical world is not merely an external one, the way Plato seems to have viewed it. In a true sense, man is his body. Man is present to himself, not in a direct, self-possessing act of reflection, but by way of his exterior givenness to himself. He does not know himself directly, but by a subsequent reflection on his concrete acts. He knows

himself by this exterior aspect which is called man's embodiment. It is for this reason that in the philosophy of man we say that man is an other to himself. In the same manner, man is present to the world and the world is present to him by way of embodiment. Man does not communicate and interact with his co-persons except as an embodied person. Man as person is an embodied self-presence and an embodied presence to the world. The very being of man is that of an embodied person. He is an embodied spirit.

Hence, if we truly respect man as person, we have to respect him in his embodied presence. We have to respect his physical life and the integrity of his body. We have to recognize all the basic material needs for the sustenance of that life and limb such as food, clothing, shelter, medical services and a supportive physical environment.

There is another important aspect regarding man's structural relationship with the physical world. We see that the physical world or the cosmos is a dynamic, hierarchical order of higher and higher forms of bodily existence. It starts from the nebulae and crystalline formations, to the more organized proteins and the first forms of life, gradually giving rise to emergent higher forms of life—the plants, the animals, and finally man. We see then that the physical universe itself seems to bear witness to a certain *telos*, though unconscious of itself which traverses all the physical world leading eventually to the emergence of human life. With the emergence of human life, conscious of itself and of the world, this *telos* threading through the cosmos has finally become conscious of itself in man. It manifests itself as the rational exigency itself of reason, the absolute end, the *telos* of all being. This absolute end or good, demanded by the rational exigency of reason in man, manifests itself to be the limit end-pole of being. At this end point being achieves full spirituality and full reflection upon itself. It is the point of fullness of communication and of reciprocal recognition and affirmation among the totality of all personal beings.<sup>31</sup>

Here then lies man's worth and dignity. Man as personal existence is consciousness and responsibility. He is consciousness of himself and consciousness of the world. He is consciousness of the orientation toward the absolute good, toward the *telos* of all being. The sense and direction of all being that has traversed the unconscious cosmos in the form of determinisms, tropisms, impulses and instincts now becomes conscious in man as being reflects upon itself. It becomes conscious in

and through man's intellect and will, in and through man's infinitely open, free personal existence. To the extent that it manifests itself, the *telos* or the absolute good reveals itself to be in the direction of greater and greater personal existence. It is toward paramount communication and complete reciprocal recognition among the total community of all personal beings. Hence, here and now, man must act. As consciousness of this orientation to the absolute goal, he is responsible for his own being, for his co-persons and for the unconscious cosmos in view of the end and goal which is the fulfillment of all being in the fullness of communication and reciprocity among the total community of all personal beings.

We can see from this structural relationship of man with the physical universe that man intrinsically belongs to and is the culminating part of the order of the cosmos. His existence, though open and free and spiritual, is nonetheless embodied existence. Because he is the culminating conscious point of the cosmos, he is responsible for its further course. In view of the absolute good and the *telos* of all existence, man then is responsible for his embodied self, for his embodied co-persons, and for the cosmos.

### Man as Person and Nature

It would follow from what we have seen that man is person as well as nature. As person, he is infinite openness. He is spiritual freedom, open to and oriented to the absolute good. But at the same time he is nature. He is in his personal being structurally related to the absolute good, to his co-persons and to the physical world. As nature, he has in common with others a set of stable, structural relationships constitutive of his personal being. On the other hand, as person, as an "I," and as openness and freedom, he achieves his uniqueness in the manner by which he takes up and lives his nature.

In concluding this section, we may say that, concretely, the norm of morality is the personal nature and dignity of man. In his personal being, man is consciousness of and orientation to the absolute good. He has a communal bond of communication and reciprocal recognition and affirmation with other persons like him and with the community of persons which virtually includes the totality of all persons. He is embodied consciousness. He is intrinsically part of the cosmos and its culminating conscious point. In terms of this concrete norm

of morality, namely the personal nature and dignity of man, the absolute good manifests itself to be toward the direction of fuller and more total personal existence.

### **Personal Nature and Dignity of Man in Historical Reality**

To say that the norm of morality is the personal nature and dignity of man is to state a general principle. Such a principle, however, must be made still more concrete because of man's historicity. We have learned from the philosophy of man that man is a historical being, and that precisely because he is both person and nature, he undergoes as well as makes or changes history. On the one hand, he has a past which is as an unrescindable given of his existence. On the other hand, as infinite openness or spiritual freedom, he has the capability to re-create his past, giving it new direction and meaning by opening up new possibilities for the future. Furthermore, because of the social nature of man, he has not only an individual past, but a social past and tradition which he shares as common destiny with others. Similarly, he also shares a common future with others, insofar as the capabilities and possibilities of action open to him are part of a common heritage of acquired human possibilities which he shares in common with others in the same historical situation. When we say, therefore, that human nature or the personal nature and dignity of man is the norm of morality, we must eventually place that human nature in the historical context. For what in the end is normative and demanding realization is the human possibilities of the historical situation.

Human nature, while remaining as nature (the three structural relationships with the good, with co-persons, with the cosmos remain as constants of the human condition), historically evolves a set of human possibilities for personal existence. The constitutive relationships remain, but their modalities change historically. For example, if we take the present historical context, because of human achievements of modern history in various fields, like the physical sciences, depth psychology, medicine, food production and social management, we know more about our human nature today and we can do more in terms of human possibilities and spiritual freedom. What in the past were undreamed of possibilities have now become normative requirements for what man's being ought to have

and be. The general principle and norm remain the same. It is the personal nature and dignity of man. However, we now have better knowledge of human life and the requirements for hygiene and health of the human body. Our knowledge of the physical environment and its various linkages with human life and our knowledge regarding psychical forces which are influential in our behavior and in the formation of our personality has improved. Our technical knowledge about food production and industrial processes and social structure transformations has created new human possibilities which in turn have imposed on us more specific norms regarding how we ought to respect and affirm the dignity of the human person.

When we say, therefore, that human nature or the personal nature and dignity of man is the norm of morality, we state a general principle. But in the concrete, we must specify: "Human nature in its historical context." In the end human nature is purely abstract unless we take it in terms of the concrete human possibilities of the historical situation, which then become the effective norm of the good for that historical moment.

### **Personal Nature and Dignity of Man in Moments of Historical Crisis**

We have seen that the concrete norm of morality is human nature or the personal nature of man taken in its historical context. In other words it is the concrete human possibilities of the historical situation. Now, there are moments in human history when established human possibilities of the historical situation come into question in view of new human possibilities dawning on the horizon. In other words, these are moments when new possibilities appear and set into motion historical developments that eventually give rise to a new historical situation. This is what is meant by moments of historical crisis. They are moments which are turning points, when the future begins to show on the horizon but whose coming still hangs in the balance and depends upon the response of man.

At such moments, those established human possibilities accepted as normative for the historical situation begin to be questioned in the light of new inchoate possibilities. In our present age and historical situation, for example, we have witnessed moral questions raised regarding the place and role allotted by tradition for woman in the family and in human

society. With the development of science and technology, the basis of the social structure which was until recently dependent on human physical force for the main functions of work, production, peace and order, has shifted toward a more machine-based structure which tends to equalize the capacities of man and woman. During the age of purely manual labor, it was understandable that the physically weaker sex be relegated to a lower status in society. But in an age of tractor-plows and computers, such differentiations have become irrelevant.

Another example is the questions being raised more and more today regarding the morality of capital punishment. There was a time when, due perhaps to the instability of the social order, capital punishment was viewed as a matter of moral and divine right of the State for the preservation of peace and order. Today, however, with the stabilization of social and juridical processes, and the adequacy of incarceration and rehabilitation measures to guarantee social order, the State's exercise and the right of capital punishment have been questioned as an act of violence against the human person.

A third example is the new spirit of social justice that is in the air these days which challenges the old, established concepts of justice and private property. With the emergence of modern economy and a more broadly social mode of production as opposed to the family-centered mode of the past and with the development of the social sciences and the possibilities of social transformations, our traditional concepts of ownership, just sharing, and social responsibility have begun to be challenged.

What is to be noted here about these moments of historical crisis is the prospect of a shift toward a more exigent norm and ideal of what man ought to do and be. In these moments of crisis man is faced with the challenge of breaking new ground and opening new human possibilities in view of the good and in view of a fuller and more total personal existence. Depending upon the action of man, a new historical situation can emerge and usher in a fuller and better personal existence for man.

What we have then is not too different from what we saw in the earlier section. However, in that section the emphasis was on the historical possibilities we share with our contemporaries in the historical situation which constitute the concrete human nature and the norm for the historical moment. Here the stress is on the moment of historical shift and the prospect of new human possibilities which emerges. We could perhaps say in paraphrase of Thomas Kuhn that during normal

historical situations the norm is the established human possibilities of the age.<sup>32</sup> But in historical moments of crisis and revolution, there is a demand for a paradigm-shift in view of the good. Questions are raised regarding the established norm in view of a norm which is more exigent. It is not yet quite established and seems offhand to be strange and disturbing. Yet it is in line with the orientation to the absolute good and toward a fuller and more total personal existence. Such a moment of historical crisis constitutes a demand for a paradigm-shift in view of the good and requires of man greater discernment, courage and generosity.

### Study Guide Questions

1. Explain the meaning of the concept "person."
2. Explain how man's openness to the "true" and the "good" establishes man as person.
3. What does it mean that man is not only person but nature?
4. What is meant by the three structural relationships of man: openness to the good, to the community of persons, to the cosmos? What is meant by "structural" relationships?
5. Show how the relations to the horizon of the good and to fellowman are intertwined in man.
6. Show how man is structurally related to the cosmos. Show how man's embodiment and relation to the cosmos is closely intertwined with his two other structural relations — to fellowman and to the horizon of the good.
7. Explain in what sense there seems to be an unconscious *telos* in the cosmos which emerge in a conscious manner in man.
8. Show how this *telos* manifests itself in man as the fullness of communication and reciprocity among the community of all persons.
9. Explain what is meant by saying that the concrete norm of morality is the personal nature and dignity of man. What is the relation between conscience as norm as seen in the previous chapter and the personal nature and dignity of man as concrete norm?
10. Why is there further need of placing this concrete norm in the historical context? In what sense does the norm become more exigent as history progresses?
11. What is meant by "moments of historical crisis"?

12. What happens to the current concrete historically contextualized norm in moments of historical crisis?
13. Show the flow through the three levels of the personal nature and dignity of man as concrete norm: from the general principle, to the historically contextualized norm, to the moment of historical crisis.

### **Suggested Assignment**

Write an essay treating some aspect of the personal nature and dignity of man as historically contextualized norm now undergoing a moment of historical crisis. For example, the dignity and status of women in society, the principle of capital punishment, the concept of a "just war," the sovereignty of the nation-state.

Or else write an essay about the most common violations of the personal nature and dignity of man we see in our community. Show precisely in what sense they are violations against the human person.

## Chapter Eleven

### **Norm of Morality: The Natural Law**

BEFORE WE PROCEED to the exposition of Natural Law as the norm of morality, it would be good to see at least in brief the history and tradition of the Natural Law doctrine.

We can trace the concept of Natural Law in Greek Antiquity to Heraclitus of Ephesus (circa 540-470 B.C.). Heraclitus is famous for his saying regarding the constant passage and change in everything and the view that everything is caught in a constant strife between opposites. Yet he also taught that things change according to a certain law. He said that the relation of opposition among things, while it brings them against each other, also relates them and brings them together. Heraclitus taught that beyond the constantly changing phenomena there is a *Logos*, a prevailing reason and order, that keeps everything in harmony like an eternal fire that measures out the changes according to proportion.

The Sophists, who were influential during the fifth and the fourth century B.C., have the distinction, among other things, of having been the first to initiate the practice of higher formal education in the Western world. They were professional teachers, centered in Athens, who for a fee would go around the different cities of the Greek-speaking world of that time, teaching young men mostly of noble families a broad spectrum of subjects. They taught grammar, the nature of virtue and of morality, the history of society and the arts, poetry, music, mathematics, astronomy and the physical science, and, of course, rhetoric and debate, for which the sophists were principally known. Among their common teachings was the belief that there was a distinction between the conventions and customs established in the traditions of society (*nomos*) and the higher laws of nature (*phusis*). These higher laws of nature are the source of norms

for human conduct superior to those proceeding from society's traditions. The most important among the Sophists were Protagoras (circa 490-after 421 B.C.) and Gorgias (circa 483-376 B.C.).

Aristotle (384-323 B.C.), as we have seen, postulated the theory of the four causes which constitute beings in their specific natures, govern their proper activities, and set their specific ends and goals. The end or purpose of anything is to become the fulfillment of what by its nature or form it is potentially. In the case of man, what constitutes him as a being different from the lower beings is reason. The formal cause of man is reason, which therefore is also his final cause or end. The proper activity of reason is a kind of immanent activity which finds its fulfillment in the participation in the communal life of the *polis* and, on a higher level, the activity of contemplation. Man must follow the tendencies inherent to his nature leading to these two final ends of reason in order to attain the good or the fulfillment of his rational nature.

Stoicism is a school of philosophy which had a broad influence over Greek and Roman antiquity from about 312 B.C. to 200 A.D. Its first master, Zeno of Citium in Cyprus, used to teach in Athens in the painted stoa or portico, a colonnade on the north side of the marketplace. Hence, those who followed in the school of thought which he started came to be known as the Stoics. The Stoics taught that there is a *Logos*, a fundamental principle ordering and unifying the whole universe. One of the manifestations of the *Logos* is the human intellect. They also held that all men belong to one, universal society and that it was of little significance whether a man was of noble birth or a slave, citizen or noncitizen. Men all belong to one, natural order. The Stoics also had a concept of fate which was viewed as a system of interlocking causes and effects governing all that happens in the world. This system forms a total cosmic pattern, of which the individual constitutes only a small part. The individual may in the course of his life suffer adversities such as sickness or misfortune but all individual things and events serve toward a whole which is seen ultimately to be good. In the context, therefore, of this rational and moral order of the universe, there are "things according to nature" and "things contrary to nature." It is the duty of man to take control of his feelings and emotions and grow in virtue, striving for "the first things according to nature."

The Stoics had a deep influence on Roman law. It is seen, for example, in the *jus gentium*, a law that applied to both Roman citizens and noncitizens. It was grounded on the sense

of a "nature" common to all peoples, which dictated reasonableness and moderation even in the administration of the older *jus civile* which were the laws governing relations among Roman citizens. Among the most prominent Stoics, apart from Zeno of Citium the first master (circa 334-262 or 261 B.C.), were Chrysippus (circa 280-206 B.C.), Panaetius (circa 180-109 B.C.), Poseidonius (circa 135-circa 50 B.C.), Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 B.C.), Lucius Seneca (4 B.C.-65 A.D.), Epictetus (born circa 50 A.D.), the Phrygian slave, and Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (121-180), the Roman emperor.

The Scholastic philosophers and theologians of the medieval period brought the idea and doctrine of the Natural Law to its full development. There were differences among them as to whether the Natural Law was ultimately based on God's Reason or God's Will. John Scotus Erigena (circa 810-877), William of Ockham (circa 1280-1349), and much later during the second flowering of Scholasticism, Francisco Suarez, (1548-1617) considered the divine will rather than the divine reason as the source of the Natural Law. This resulted in a more voluntaristic view of law in general. However, it is recognized by many that the most outstanding of these Scholastic Natural Law systematizations was that of St. Thomas Aquinas (1224-74), which we shall see later.

During the modern period, particularly the Age of Enlightenment, the Natural Law became a highly rationalistic system. It was usually derived from a hypothetical "state of nature" of man which was supposed to have preceded the "social contract" and the "state of civil society." Man was shown to have certain natural rights, such as the right to life, to the pursuit of happiness, to property, and to individual freedom prior to any social authority or legislation. In this modern group we may include the names of Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), John Locke (1632-1704), Charles Louis de Montesquieu (1689-1755), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78). This modern school of the Natural Law was influential in the political revolutionary changes of the time, like the Declaration of Independence of the United States which cited "inalienable" and "self-evident" rights of man, and the French Revolution's Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen which invoked "imprescriptible natural rights." However, the highly rationalistic and doctrinaire approach to the Natural Law of this modern school of thought also gave rise to a negative reaction toward the whole idea of Natural Law, which eventually led to Utilitarianism and Legal Positivism.

At the end of this brief historical overview of the Natural Law doctrine, it might be good to mention in more recent time the group of Protestant reformational theologians who reject the very notion of Natural Law. Since man is of sinful nature, human nature therefore is corrupt, and any law based on this nature could only be a corrupt mirroring of the eternal law of God. The laws of justice and morality, therefore, can only be derived from the relationship between God and man based on divine revelation which is "the law of Christ." In this group are names like Helmut Thielicke and Jacques Ellul.<sup>33</sup>

### St. Thomas on Natural Law

Going back to the medieval period, let us take a closer look at the Natural Law theory of St. Thomas Aquinas, which is the main philosophical basis for the traditional Catholic teaching on the Natural Law and social doctrine.

St. Thomas defines law in general as a rational ordinance or order promulgated for the common good by one in charge of the community. In this light, the law therefore commands, prohibits, permits and punishes in view of the common good.<sup>34</sup>

The Eternal Law is the eternal wisdom of God. It is the divine plan in the mind of God by which He created man and the world, and by which He now governs all things as supreme principle of all creation.<sup>35</sup> St. Thomas says that since we cannot know God directly in his essence except later on through beatific vision, we cannot know the Eternal Law except partially as reflected in our rational nature and through revelation.<sup>36</sup>

The Eternal Law is viewed as branching out into two general divisions. There is the law that governs the nonrational creatures by way of determinisms and unknowing impulses, and the Natural Law, which governs man by way of reason in keeping with his rational nature. As we have seen, St. Thomas held that with *synderesis*, man has the natural disposition in any given situation to discern at least in general what is good and what is bad. He is moved by a fundamental obligation because of his general orientation to God as final end to do the good and avoid evil. Here then is the most fundamental law of Natural Law. Do good and avoid evil.<sup>37</sup> Man comes to awareness of this fundamental law in underived fashion like the first principles of the speculative intellect. It is, as St. Thomas says, a "trace of divine light in us" (*impressio divini luminis in nobis*).<sup>38</sup>

Aside from the fundamental principle to do good and avoid evil, man further knows unerringly more specific general principles based on his rational nature. He knows the principles regarding the sacredness of life, marriage and the family and society and justice. St. Thomas held that because they are grounded in the very nature of man these principles are universal and known by all men at all times.<sup>39</sup>

Beyond these primary principles, other general moral principles may be further derived. But due to the elaborateness of their derivation, there may at times be error that creeps in regarding these secondary principles.<sup>40</sup> Finally, there are moral principles that are obtained by determination and demanded by the situation. For example, the regulation specifying that one must drive on the right-hand side of the road rather than the left does not flow directly from the primary laws of morality. But a decision has to be made to determine it one way or the other, or there would be chaos. Once it has been decided to adopt the right side (in countries like Britain or Japan it is the other way around), for an individual to choose to drive on the other side would be to endanger lives of others as well as his own. This makes it immoral.

These general moral principles, however, are still insufficient for discerning what must be done in the concrete situation. According to St. Thomas, we must use practical wisdom or prudence, an understanding of the concrete confluence of circumstances, to be able to apply these general principles and to determine what we must do or not do in the situation.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, in the matter of concrete application, a distinction is made between cases of the more usual or ordinary kind of circumstances which call for the typical kind of application (*synesis*), and cases of the more novel or exceptional kind of situation, which require a more creative response (*gnome*).<sup>42</sup>

We see, therefore, that the Natural Law for St. Thomas was never meant to be a whole code of moral law to determine what we ought to do. Rather, in his view, the Natural Law is essentially human practical reason which takes cognizance of its human nature in view of the good and the final end to which it is necessarily oriented. The norm of morality is ultimately God, of course, who is man's final end. But since we cannot know God's essence except in the next life, the more proximate norm of morality is right reason or the rational nature of man, in other words, the norm is practical reason of man necessarily oriented to its final end. It is reason that knows it must do good and avoid evil. It is reason embodied in human nature that knows the worth of human life, of sexuality and the family.

of human society and justice. It is reason finally that, with prudence or practical wisdom, intends, deliberates, and judges what is to be done in the concrete situation in view of the good.<sup>43</sup>

One difficulty in St. Thomas's Natural Law doctrine is the ambiguity of his position regarding right reason and the rational nature of man. Sometimes, the Natural Law and thus the norm of morality for St. Thomas is right reason, proceeding from man's rational nature, sharpened by the virtue of prudence or practical wisdom, and ultimately grounded in the Eternal Law of God. At other times the Natural Law is seen to be the reflection or expression of our specific human nature. It is rational, of course, but nonetheless nature in its fixity and factualness. In this view, man, by some of his aspects is seen to be similar to brute animals. For example, as St. Thomas himself says, man is similar to animals in his natural inclinations toward the propagation of the species. To hold, therefore, that the rational nature of man is the norm of morality could mean two different things, depending on whether the stress is on right reason or on nature. If the norm is understood to be Natural Law viewed essentially as the demand or exigency of right reason, man is intellect and will, struggling to be true to himself with this demand for the infinite and for the absolute good. Then we have a norm of morality in keeping with the dignity of man as personal existence and as historical being.

On the other hand, if the norm is understood to be the Natural Law viewed as a mere reflection of human nature understood as a purely fixed entity, as a mere part of a fixed order of nature and of society, with his fixed place, his determined processes and his fixed natural inclinations and drives, then there would seem to be ground for those who criticize the Natural Law doctrine of St. Thomas as being too "static," or "naturalistic," or "biologistic," or "objectivistic." But there is sufficient basis in St. Thomas to render these criticisms unnecessary.

### **The Natural Law as Norm of Morality**

What we shall see in this chapter is a mere implication drawn from the preceding chapter.

To state it briefly, since we have established in the previous chapter that the concrete norm of morality is the personal nature and dignity of man, to the extent that we can derive certain principles proceeding from this common personal nature

of man, we have a set of principles binding on all men, and in this sense, universal.

While it is true that man as person is a unique "I," a self and a self-determining being who in a true sense possesses himself and is responsible for his existence, it also remains true that he has certain essential structures constitutive of his human existence. He has these in common with other men, as we have already seen. The specific modalities of these structures may vary, but man, as long as he is man, will always have some form or other of each of these essential features and relationships. In brief, man has a nature which he shares in common with other men, independently of his choice or preference.

Hence, all men are characterized by an openness or orientation to the horizon of the absolute good. By virtue of this, all men have a sense of good and bad. All men are related to their fellowmen within a community of co-persons. Man is a social being. All men are embodied. All men are present to themselves and are present to the world and to their fellowmen by way of their embodied condition. All men find themselves as physical beings in a physical world, enmeshed in a whole system of physical structures and processes pertaining to their physical lives. They all experience birth, nutrition, growth, health, disease, warmth and shelter, work and production, aging and death. All men have psyches which, as modern psychology has shown, represent a system of latent dynamic forces which influence behavior and the constitution of the concrete personality. All men live in communities which have their own dynamic structures which are economic, social, political, cultural, and historical.

Insofar, therefore, that man is person as well as nature, the openness to the good that constitutes man properly as conscience is the source not only of a purely personal moral obligation addressed to the "I," but also of certain universal principles normative of all men and of all human action in general. This is what is meant essentially by the Natural Law as norm of morality.

To affirm, therefore, the existence of a Natural Law as norm of morality is essentially to affirm that there are universal moral principles binding on all men by virtue of a common human nature that they all share. It is to affirm that a morally good will is a will to universality, as Kant would say, and a willingness to abide by what is valid for all men.

This universality of moral principles based on a common human nature should not, however, be viewed mechanically.

It does not require that all men do the same thing at the same time. That would be more of animal instinct than rational human nature. Rather, the universality of moral principles can be viewed on three levels.

First as St. Thomas has pointed out in explaining *synderesis*, because of man's fundamental orientation to his final end man's openness to the good, the first principle of morality is "Do good and avoid evil." As a first principle, this is grasped by man intuitively, like the self-evident principles on the speculative level. To do good and avoid evil is the prescription to act in such a manner that we do not contradict and destroy our self in our action. It is to act according to the demands and finality of our being. It is to be more of what we already are. To do good is to be more of a man, to realize one's humanity. Viewed in this light, we see that to do good and avoid evil is a universal principle incumbent on all men. There may be variations from culture to culture as to how we must do good. But all cultures require in some form or other to do good and avoid evil, to respect man, to be just, to follow the ideal vision of man particular to the community. Due to human finitude and historicity, there may be differences in the specific ways of viewing the possibilities of man. There may be specific forms of the good, but the principle itself of doing good and avoiding evil is universal among all human societies.

On a second level, there are universal moral principles in the sense that, because of the common human nature that we all share, there are certain acts which may be said to be of their very nature and universally violative of man and of human dignity. For example, slavery, torture, prostitution. Variations on this level can only be explained by lack of knowledge regarding human nature and its possibilities. Or sometimes by a certain milieu and atmosphere of inhumanity and immorality that clouds man's sense of conscience and the sense of his own dignity as a human person.

On a third level, the level of concrete moral action itself, it is true that morality is ultimately action and thus concrete and situational. Nonetheless a morally good act is one which any other man in my place ought to do. Putting it another way, any other man knowing my situation should be able to come to the same judgment I have regarding the morality of my action. Concrete and situational as it is, moral action is nothing but the putting into action of the universal principle of doing good and avoiding evil. Owing to differences of circumstances in the concrete situation, there will necessarily be variations in what actually we must do in response to the good. But

insofar as they are moral actions, they are responses to the same universal moral injunction to do good and avoid evil. They are subject to the same universal principles such as to be just, or to respect your fellowman.

### **The Natural Law in the Concrete Situation**

We have seen in the previous chapter that human nature must be viewed in a historical perspective. Insofar as man is both human nature and person, he undergoes as well as makes or changes history. Thus, while the three structural relationships of man (openness to the good, social existence, embodiment and relationship to the physical world) are constants constitutive of the human condition the particular modalities of such structural relationships evolve in history. More exactly, the particular modalities of such structural relationships are what define a particular historical epoch or situation. For example, one basic trait which distinguishes the period of Greek and Roman antiquity from the succeeding medieval period is the manner by which man viewed the ultimate ground and source of all reality and the manner by which man viewed his own mode of existence. The men of antiquity viewed the ultimate principle of all reality as some kind of an impersonal *Logos* or reason or ground. While man, by virtue of his intellect, had special access to the *Logos* which formed the basis of man's stature and dignity, nonetheless, owing to the impersonal nature of the ultimate principle, man tended to view himself as eventually absorbed into an impersonal, universal principle in some form or other of pantheism. Furthermore, to the extent that nature and society were viewed as manifestations or extensions of such an impersonal ultimate principle, man was viewed as subject to the order of nature and of society. There was no true sense of the worth of the community of individual human persons. Christianity and its doctrine regarding a transcendent and personal creator-God opened up man's awareness about his possibilities as an individual human person of incommensurable worth. If we move further on in history, we see that one basic trait which differentiates the modern period from the medieval is the set of technological and social possibilities opened up by the modern age that was not accessible during the medieval age. St. Thomas was led to accept, like Aristotle, that some men are meant to be slaves belonging to their masters. But Francisco Suarez in the early part of the modern period argued for the natural rights of the human

person such as life, liberty and property. He condemned the Aristotelian thesis of "natural slavery" and maintained that all forms of servitude are effects of human positive law. Similarly, he criticized Spanish colonial practices in the newly discovered world. He held that the peoples of these lands constituted sovereign states and were members of a community of nations equal to Spain.<sup>44</sup>

Human nature must be viewed in the context of the historical situation. The Natural Law which is based on human nature must be taken in the context of the historical situation. The universal principle: "Do good and avoid evil," "be just," "respect your fellowman" must be interpreted in the light of the human possibilities opened up by the historical situation. In one historical period characterized by a subsistent type of economy and a primitive technology, respecting your fellowman might mean, among other things, treating your slaves humanely. This is the best possible situation that could be achieved under the historical circumstances. In another age more modern and more technologically endowed, it would mean abolishing all forms of servitude as contrary to human dignity. In a subsequent age with possibilities of major social transformations afforded by the social sciences and technologies, respecting fellowman could mean restructuring society itself so that there is a more just and equitable sharing of the burdens and benefits of economic production with provisions for basic education, employment, a minimum family wage and essential social welfare benefits for all.

### **The Natural Law in Moments of Historical Crisis**

Here again, we merely follow the moment of historical crisis in human nature of the previous chapter. As we saw in that chapter, what is referred to here is that precise moment of shift or *kairos*, as the theologians would say, when the old established human possibilities of a historical period come to be challenged by new possibilities that have arisen. They open up opportune possibilities for the future and for the beginning of a new age. At moments like these, we have a feeling that the very foundations of our existence are being shaken. But in reality, what is taking place is the demand for a shift to a more sensitive and generous conscience, to a more exigent norm and a more demanding law in view of the good and of the worth and dignity of the community of human persons. We get the feeling that the very universal laws of morality themselves are

being challenged. But in reality what is demanded is a reinterpretation of the law in the light of the new possibilities for human spiritual freedom and dignity already made possible by new historical developments. What is being demanded in the name of the universal laws of the good and of justice and of the respect for fellowman, is a critical review of our established moral ways and judgments in view of new paths and openings for man.

### Summary

At this point it might be good to take a look at the last three chapters we have seen. As was pointed out in the beginning of chapter nine, these three chapters are really aspects of one and the same thing viewed under different aspects.

First of all, the ground and norm of morality, as we saw, is conscience. It is the fundamental orientation and openness of man to the absolute good, issuing in the fundamental moral principle: "Do good and avoid evil." This is the source and ground of all morality just as the source and ground of metaphysics is man's openness to being and the judgment of existence, expressed in the first speculative principles: "It exists." "There is." "Being is." "Being is being." "Being cannot be and not be at the same time." In the same manner, in moral experience, man as rational exigency takes consciousness of himself as an orientation to the absolute good, the very demand of his rational being. Man grasps being as unfinished, as still to be done which imposes upon man an absolute obligation to act in view of what must be, of the absolute good. This results in the fundamental moral judgment: "Good must be done." "Do good and avoid evil." In other words, act in fidelity to your being. Act according to what your very being ought to be, according to the very essence and exigency and finality of your being. Act so that you do not contradict your being as rational nature.

This fundamental orientation of man as conscience may be viewed on three levels. There is the fundamental orientation to the absolute good, the concrete practical judgment in the concrete situation, and the dynamic moment when conscience finds itself called upon to shift to a more sensitive and more generous stage, to a more faithful openness to the good.

Secondly, the ground and norm of morality is the personal nature and dignity of man. In other words, man as conscience grasps himself more concretely as person as well as human

nature, as spiritual freedom as well as structural relationships to the good, to co-persons and to the cosmos. More concretely the ground and norm of morality is the personal nature of man and the good. More concretely, it is the maximum of spiritual freedom or personal existence, and thus the maximum of communication and reciprocity among the community of all persons.

Reflecting the three levels of conscience, the three levels of the personal nature and dignity of man are the fundamental condition of man as person as well as human nature and as spiritual freedom as well as structure, the concrete human possibilities of a given historical situation, and the dynamic moment when old established human possibilities of a given historical age are put into question by newly emergent human possibilities of spiritual freedom and personal existence.

Third, the ground and norm of morality could be said to be the Natural Law or universal moral laws which flow from the personal nature and dignity of man. Insofar as man is not pure conscience but also human nature, morality is not purely a unique relationship and openness to the good, but a common openness and obligation shared by the community of all persons.

Again, the Natural Law may be viewed on three levels, reflecting the three levels of conscience and the three levels of the personal nature of man. These are, first, the Natural Law in terms of universal principles such as do good and avoid evil, be just, respect your fellowmen. Second, there is the level of concrete application in the context of the possibilities of a given historical situation. Finally, there is the level of historical crisis when there is a demand of a reinterpretation and new concrete applications in the light of new emergent human possibilities brought about by historical developments.

Ontologically, the order of foundation is as we have seen. First of all, there is conscience or this fundamental openness of man to the good expressed in the judgment of moral existence: "Good must be done." "Do good and avoid evil." Secondly, the fundamental orientation and openness to the absolute good is viewed more concretely in terms of the personal nature and dignity of man. Thirdly, there is the Natural Law or the universal principles of moral action flowing from the personal nature and dignity of man.

In concrete life, however, the order begins with the concrete communal life of the community of persons in a given historical situation. Here we begin with the concrete historical possibilities of the personal nature and dignity of man embodied in the communal life and tradition in which the person is born and

raised. In the course of life, the person imbibes the moral tradition of his community which is the embodiment of the ideal vision of man or of the personal nature and dignity of man particular to that community. Secondly, this concrete set of human possibilities embodied in the cultural life of a given community is articulated in the form of moral laws expressed in the community's traditional maxims, sayings, teachings and shared values, hence, expressions of the Natural Law. Thirdly, the communal tradition and moral prescriptions of the community help form the conscience of the individual person as he imbibes the cultural tradition of the community. The human individual eventually reaches the threshold of moral awareness, and emerges as an individual personal conscience. What was formerly a sociological or inherited traditional morality in the human individual becomes a more reflected and reappropriated moral life. It passes on to a true openness to the good or conscience properly speaking. As he goes on through normal life, the individual as conscience applies the principles of morality to the situation. But now and then, there are moments of crisis, opportune moments of growth for conscience depending upon how the individual responds to such moments of *katros*. Viewed from the vantage point of the parallel process of the personal nature and dignity of man, the configuration of concrete historical human possibilities in a given situation and moments of historical crisis and change, it is ultimately the manner in which the individuals in moments of crisis of conscience respond to the new historical possibilities brought about by historical crisis which determines whether the community will move on to establish new human possibilities. It determines whether the community will usher in a new historical period and a more faithful sense of the personal nature and dignity of man. Viewed from the vantage point of the parallel process of universal moral principles of the Natural Law, the concrete cultural embodiment in a given historical situation, and moments of crisis and reinterpretation of the Natural Law, it is the moral response of the individuals in moments of crisis of conscience facing up to the challenge brought about by new historical possibilities in moments of historical crisis and the historical changes resulting from man's responsible action which eventually give rise to the demand for a reinterpretation of the Natural Law in view of greater fidelity to what is good and what is in respect of the person and the dignity of man. In turn, the reinterpretation of Natural Law in greater fidelity to what is good and what is just is what sets forth a communal ambience and tradition favorable to the emergence of more sensitive and more

generous individual consciences. So we come full circle except on a higher level and in a kind of upward spiral movement.

It will be noticed that this concrete cycle may go in the opposite direction. Depending upon how the individual persons respond to the moments of crisis of conscience and to the new historical possibilities brought about by moments of historical crisis, the community may respond to the new human possibilities which result in a higher moral life and moral sense in the community. Or, due to moral obduracy and lack of generosity, the community may be mired in stagnation and deterioration of its communal moral traditions. This would lead to a growing blindness in the manner by which the community takes up and interprets and applies the moral laws. This would in turn ultimately result in a communal atmosphere conducive to the formation of more and more numb and callous consciences. This time it would be a downward spiral cycle.

In any case, what is central is the role of the moral individual. How he acts. Whether or not in conscience he responds and collaborates with others, and takes responsibility for himself, for his neighbor and for the cosmos, in view of the demand and call of the good and toward the fullness of communication and reciprocity among the total community of all persons.

### Study Guide Questions

1. Show how each of the following conceived of the Natural Law—Heraclitus, the Sophists, Aristotle, the Stoics, the medieval Scholastics, the theorists of the Age of Enlightenment.
2. What is Thomas Aquinas' notion of law in general? What does he mean by the Eternal Law?
3. What is meant by *synderesis*? In what sense is it the source of the fundamental principle of Natural Law?
4. What are the first principles of Natural Law? How do they flow from the fundamental principle?
5. What is meant by the secondary principles of Natural Law? How do they proceed from the primary principles?
6. What is meant by practical wisdom or *phronesis*? Why is there need of practical wisdom in the application of principles as man acts?
7. What is meant by saying that the Natural Law for Thomas Aquinas is essentially human practical reason and not a whole moral code?

8. In what sense may we say, in spite of the variances and differences in cultures and moral systems, that there are common moral principles binding on all men?
9. What does it mean to affirm the existence of a Natural Law as norm of morality? What would the denial of the existence of such a norm signify?
10. In what sense may we say that the principle: "Do good and avoid evil" is common to all men?
11. In what sense may it be said that there are certain acts of man which are immoral of their very nature?
12. In what sense may we say that even with all the differences of concrete circumstances, there remains a common Natural Law binding on all?
13. Show the flow through the three levels of Natural Law as norm of morality—from the Natural Law in general, to Natural Law as historically contextualized, to Natural Law in moments of historical crisis.
14. Show how conscience is the fundamental norm and ground of morality, from which flow the personal nature and dignity of man as concrete norm, and from which proceeds the Natural Law as formulated rules of action.
15. Show how in concrete life the repercussions take place among the three levels—conscience, personal nature and dignity of man, the Natural law.

### **Suggested Assignment**

Write an essay about the document, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights." Would you say that it is an expression of the Natural Law? Would it be a statement of general principles of Natural Law? Or Natural Law historically contextualized? Or is it an expression of Natural Law in historical crisis? Or write an essay about some Filipino traditions, institutions, customs, wise sayings, showing how they are the embodiment or application of the Natural Law in our historical context. Or write an essay regarding certain historical embodiments of the Natural Law at present undergoing a historical crisis. For example, the concept of the right of private property in the land reform law.

## Chapter Twelve

# The Ultimate Foundation of Morality

WE HAVE SEEN in the preceding chapters that the ground and norm of morality is conscience necessarily oriented to the good. More concretely, it is the nature and dignity of the human person in its essential relations to the good, to other persons, and to the physical world. Or in terms of formulated principles of action flowing from the personal nature and dignity of man, it is the Natural Law. Having resolved the question regarding the ground and norm of morality, we have to settle one more fundamental problem, namely, the ultimate ground of morality. The question inevitably arises because of one of the constitutive traits of moral experience, namely, the element of absolute obligation which we saw in the descriptive section earlier.

In the description of the moral structure of existence we saw that man as moral being is fundamentally open to the good and necessarily oriented to a final end. While this good or final end does not manifest itself clearly as a specific object, it manifests itself to be toward the direction of an ideal end-point where being attains fulfillment and full reflection upon itself. It is the point of maximum personal existence and communication and reciprocity among the total community of all persons. This final end manifests itself as the very exigency of man's rational or personal nature and of man's intellect and will. The good of man is not merely a particular good of some particular nature but the ontological good, the very *telos* of all being which is demanded by man's being as reason.

The ontological good as the very exigency of man's rational nature, however, is not sufficient to ground the element of absolute obligation in moral experience. While the ontological good indicates the general horizon toward which the moral will

is oriented, it does not give the sufficient ground for the impetus or *conatus*. It does not ground the fact of man's will being necessarily oriented toward a certain direction. Granted that the good of man is the ontological good and the good which is demanded by the exigency of his being as reason, there is still no sufficient ground to justify why man must be consistently rational. Why should he necessarily go for his final end? Why must man take life seriously? Why may he not simply opt to enjoy life and "let the chips fall as they may"? The good of man, as rational exigency, is the ontological good and the *telos* of being itself. So what? The ontological good remains the exigency of reason. But that does not explain why I must necessarily seek it under absolute obligation. The fact of man's necessary orientation to the good by absolute obligation remains to be explained.

There must be a distinction, therefore, between the ontological good and the moral good. Because the obligation by which man is bound to the good is not simply reducible to the rational exigency of man's rational nature for the ontological good. Our moral experience tends to show that moral obligation is more than just the rational exigency of man's being for the good. True, "the good" seems to signify man's final end which is the fulfillment of man's personal being. Yet over and above "the good" as rational exigency of man's being, there seems to be in moral experience the fact that we must act absolutely in view of this end and unconditionally.

Morality does not simply mean man choosing to live rationally according to the demands of his rational nature, as Aristotle might have thought. If so, the good would tend to become a purely facultative or optional choice. Or as Kant would say, the imperative would be purely hypothetical: If you want to be happy, if you want to achieve yourself, then you must live in accordance with your rational nature. It may be dumb, uncouth, or unbecoming and thus irrational, for a man not to choose the rational good. That would be just about it. But what if man chooses to take things easy, or even to make a fool of himself? He would be at perfect liberty to do as he pleases. In other words, the choices would remain as equal alternatives which man may take or leave.

It seems, however, that there is more to being moral than just living rationally or living sanely if man wants to attain his end. To be moral is to live up to an absolute obligation and to do the good under absolute obligation. To be good or to be bad, then, are not alternatives equally open to man. Man is unconditionally and absolutely oriented to the good. In moral

experience, we seem to experience being subject to an obligation that does not stem merely from the rational exigency immanent in our rational nature. In the experience of moral obligation, we experience being bound by some order of transcendence. In this lies the inviolable nature of conscience. It is inviolable insofar as it signifies not merely an orientation to a rationally demanded end, but openness to an absolute dimension. Here lies the worth and dignity of the human person.

We have come back then to the *aporia* that we first met in the description of moral experience. On the one hand, "the good" presents itself as that which is the very fulfillment of man's nature and the exigency of man's rational being. On the other hand, "the good" presents itself as a matter of absolute, unconditional obligation, beyond mere human inclination or exigency.

A problem then emerges. What is the source and origin of such an absolute obligation? Is it something really transcendent to man? In which case, is moral obligation then not some kind of an external force or violence imposing itself on man? But does this then not negate the essential nature of morality as human action, properly speaking? On the other hand, can the source of obligation be man himself? Or his nature as reason or freedom posing itself and striving to be true to itself? If so, can there really be an absolute obligation? Since, in this case, man himself is the source of obligation, can man truly oblige himself? Or does this not reduce morality to a mere rational project that man chooses to adopt for himself facultatively?

There are two main philosophical positions regarding the problem. But before considering them, let us first take a brief look at a nonphilosophical theory regarding the question. This is the psycho-sociological theory. Because it is nonphilosophical, properly speaking, it does not exactly meet the point of the philosophical question at hand. However, the theory is of widespread influence and carries philosophical implications, and so merits consideration.

### **The Psycho-Sociological Theory**

In this perspective, society itself or the social system is the source and origin of moral obligation. Society forms a collective or organic whole which is transcendent and yet at the same time immanent in the individual personal members. The individual person is viewed as a function and a product of the

different social factors which compose the social system. These are tools and technology, economic organization, political structure, and sociocultural values. In this view, morality is a mere function of society, only a reflection of the norms and values of the social system. Hence, the individual conscience is a mere reflection of the prevailing social-cultural values. This is explained further by way of certain psychological mechanisms. Man at an early age imbibes the rules and values of his society mainly through the father-image. The father-image introduces a break in the early relationship between mother and child, which is an extension of the narcissistic life of the infant while in the womb of the mother. It is the father-image which represents the norms and values of society. It prevails upon the child to sublimate his narcissistic desires, and to substitute for their natural objects those which might be more socially acceptable. In the course of this process, the rules, prohibitions and values of the society are interiorized by the child. They eventually form a superego within him, which is precisely what conscience is. Hence, moral obligation is experienced as an internal dictate of conscience. But, in effect, conscience and moral obligation are traceable ultimately to the social system, its factors, its structures and dynamics.

The main features of this psycho-sociological theory bear the influence of the doctrines of Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939).

The force of the argument of the sociopsychological theory is that there is indeed an aspect of morality which lends itself to the sociopsychological approach. Insofar as morality as principles of action and a way of life is not purely a matter of personal convictions and decisions, it results in and draws from a communal tradition of shared and internalized attitudes, institutionalized ways of judging and doing, and socially established and accepted norms and ideals. Morality then is an aspect of social life which can indeed be studied sociologically and psychologically. The moral life of persons as we have seen in the introductory part presupposes a matrix of a moral social tradition which initiates man into moral life, serves as a base of support and continuity of that moral life, and eventually represents the sedimented result of the moral commitments, decisions and actions of the members of the community.

The difficulty arises, however, when one concludes that morality or moral life is "nothing but" certain socio-psychological processes which are determined and explained by a number

of factors and conditions uncovered by the methods of the human or social sciences. Here we see a shift from a legitimate scientific methodological approach to a doctrinaire position as to how things are. The adopted method is of its very nature not meant to speak about these things. It results, therefore, in a form of reductionism.

Here we see the significance of what the phenomenologists have taught us. We must return to experience itself, in this case moral experience, and to painstaking attempts to describe what in fact we are talking about when we speak of such moral topics as good and bad, obligation, conscience. While morality may lend itself to social and psychological structures and processes, essentially however, morality signifies a mode of being of man by which man goes beyond mere material or psychological or social processes. He is openness to the good and to an absolute demand, in the light of which all material and psychological and social processes themselves are to be judged as good or bad.

Besides, it can be shown that when a social scientist takes a position regarding the nature of morality and moral obligation, he claims the validity of his position which he recommends that we ourselves should adopt. He therefore makes a truth and a value claim. Otherwise, his theory and everything that he says would be mere sounds or marks signifying nothing. Implicitly, he appeals to that dimension of man by which man is open to what is true and what is good. But this dimension runs contrary to what the social scientist explicitly claims in his theory. For he claims that morality or anything else for that matter is nothing but social and psychological processes determined and explained by certain factors and conditions.

### **The Immanentist Theory**

In this perspective, the ultimate foundation of morality is man himself. More precisely it is the human spirit or man's reason and freedom, posing and realizing itself and seeking to establish for itself a realm of meaning and freedom. In the concrete, this is a realm of a truly human, personal and communal existence. In this sense, the source of moral obligation is the exigency itself of the human reason or freedom to be true to itself in realizing itself. The human spirit is its own end and its own teleology. Man is a spiritual essence with the rational exigency to be true to itself by actualizing itself.

Man or the human spirit realizes itself as reason and freedom in history. More precisely, history is essentially the human spirit in action, becoming in history. History is usually viewed as having both an objective and subjective aspect. Objective history is the accumulation of human social choices and the configuration of realized and institutionalized human reason and freedom like laws, customs, traditions, and the institutionalized communal existence of communication and reciprocity. Subjective history is human action itself. It is man in solidarity with fellowmen appropriating past human achievements in view of realizing further human possibilities in response to the demand and exigency of the human spirit to be true to itself and to further realize itself.

In brief, the whole ethical dimension of man and the source of moral obligation is man himself as reason and as freedom, with the exigency to be true to itself, to be true to itself as end, and to actualize itself to its fullness. Among the more prominent thinkers considered to be proponents of variants of this theory are Aristotle (384-323 B.C.), Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814), Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) and Karl Marx (1818-1883).

The force of the argument of the immanentist theory lies in the fact that moral experience does in a sense manifest the good as the very *telos* of the human spirit. In this regard, moral obligation can be said to be immanent in man and immanent in the tension and exigency and struggle of man with himself in view of his own teleology. For this reason the thinkers of antiquity termed the moral end precisely as the good. It is something which signifies the fulfillment and beatitude of the human spirit itself.

The question, however, may be asked whether morality then is only a necessary logical demand of reason to be in systematic coherence with itself, or is it the human rational will posing itself and being true and consistent with itself. If so, it seems to make of morality not much more than a rational project that man optionally takes up for himself as he chooses.

It may be argued that the dignity of the ethical dimension of man lies precisely in the fact that it is not a mere human facultative project, but is the exigency of the human spirit as reason and freedom to be true to itself and to realize itself. But then the question remains whether this exigency of the human spirit to be true to itself is sufficient to explain the experience of man being bound absolutely and unconditionally in moral experience.

This perspective takes into account the aspect of absolute obligation in moral experience. It is true that the end presents itself as the fulfillment of man's being and good. It is also true that the end presents itself as the demand of reason in man and as "the good," the ontological good and the *telos* of all being. Still, there remains the fact that I am oriented to this end by virtue of an absolute demand that seems to go beyond even the exigency of reason for the ontological good. I find myself obligated to my end by force of an imperative that goes beyond the rational demand for man to be true to his being as rational nature.

Viewed in this manner, it seems that the only way we can explain absolute obligation is by virtue of a principle that goes beyond the mere exigencies of man's nature. Beyond the exigencies of man's reason and antecedent to the will of man opting to be true to its being, there must be another will which is transcendent to man and which has previously willed for man a certain end and direction, even if this is the same end demanded by his own rational nature. The difference, however, is that without this antecedent will, man's orientation to his end would have been a purely optional affair. He would have been completely at liberty to decide for his end or not or to be reasonable or not. But as it stands in human existence, man is oriented to his end unconditionally, by an absolute obligation. And through man and in man, the rest of the universe is similarly oriented.

As traditional moral philosophy has taught us, what man has is not so much a free will but a free choice (*liberum arbitrium*). Man does not have exactly a free will, because he is absolutely obligated toward his final end. What he has, rather, is freedom of choice. He has the choice to follow or not his absolute obligation. He has the choice regarding proximate ends and means in view of the obligatory final end. But whichever way man chooses, he remains necessarily oriented and absolutely obligated to his final end.

It seems then that the only way we can explain the experience of absolute obligation is to admit that we have here something more than just man. In other words, apart from the rational exigencies and will of man, there is another transcendent will that wills the end of man. There is a transcendent will that has previously willed man in his being and his potentialities and rendering man's *telos* an absolute, uncondi-

tional imperative. It is as if, antecedent to man's immanent exigencies and choices, there is a transcendent will that has chosen man and his good and affirmed him or her in his or her being and fulfillment.

So, what otherwise would have been purely a demand of man's rational nature is, as moral experience bears witness, an absolute demand. Thus, morality is not merely a matter of rationality and consistency. It is ultimately a matter of living according to some transcendent vocation, by which man has been somehow preelected or preordained and destined to an end that is in line with the good and demanded by the exigencies of his rational nature, but which somehow goes even beyond.

The names identified with this transcendent position are those of Plato (429-348 B.C.), St. Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274), John Cardinal Newman (1801-1890), Maurice Blondel (1861-1949), and Emmanuel Levinas (1906- ).

The force of the argument of the transcendent theory is that it tries to remain faithful to the essential trait of moral experience by which the good presents itself not merely as the rational exigency of man's being and as the very *telos* of all being and existence, but as a matter of absolute obligation over and above all human exigencies and inclinations. In this perspective, it seems that in moral experience, man finds himself not merely in a dialectic tension with himself, but related to some order of transcendence that goes beyond the potentialities and exigencies of the human spirit.

The question, however, is whether a principle transcendent to man could be truly the source of an absolute demand. In this case, would it not be more of an external force overwhelming man rather than a demand or an exigency which imposes itself rationally, in truth and in justice?

It can perhaps be granted that moral obligation is internal to man. We have seen that the ground and norm of morality is conscience which is man as will fundamentally oriented to the good and to his end. Nonetheless, man as reason or as intellect and will, is not a self-grounding being in full possession of himself. In moral experience and in the experience of moral obligation, man finds himself beholden to that which is other than himself and his exigencies. As intellect and will he finds that he does not fully possess himself in a self-grounding obligation or a self-justifying, self-posing action. In moral experience by something other and transcendent to him and his powers. It is true that he is oriented to that which is his good

and fulfillment, but he is oriented by virtue of an obligation that does not seem simply reducible to the demands of his rational exigencies and inclinations.

So "the good" is on one hand the good for man, his final end and the rational exigency of his very being as reason, and on the other hand, it is an absolutely obligatory end and binds man unconditionally.<sup>45</sup> The only possible explanation, it seems, is that in moral experience there is, apart from the will of man, the presence of a transcendent will. Being transcendent, it is pure spirit, acting within man's innermost interiority. Yet, precisely as transcendent, the transcendent will is beyond man's mere exigencies and inclinations and obliges man toward his end, insofar as this transcendent will has willed his being and his fulfillment. This transcendent will has loved man antecedently by an absolute eternal will, before man's own time and before any exercise of his reason or freedom.

Insofar as there is a transcendent will willing man and loving man to being and to his fulfillment, the ideal end point of fullness of personal existence in the fullness of communication and reciprocity among the totality of all personal beings becomes not only a rational exigency of man's rational nature but an absolute possibility willed by the transcendent will itself.

Furthermore, the *aporia* we met in the description of moral experience between the good and the absolute obligation seems now to be resolved. It is the ultimate relation to the transcendent will which makes possible the attainment of the good, the perfection of the human person and the full communication and reciprocity among the totality of all persons. It is only with the transcendent personal being as ultimate ground of the community of persons that the human person as capacity for the infinite and for the absolute good is ultimately fulfilled.<sup>46</sup> By the same token, it is precisely the relation to the transcendent will which makes the good a matter of absolute obligation. It is something not merely demanded by the rational exigency of man's nature but willed and loved by the transcendent will itself. It is probably in this sense that St. Thomas says the person signifies that which is most perfect in all of nature<sup>47</sup> and St. Irenaeus says, "Gloria Dei, vivens homo."<sup>48</sup>

We must, however, remind ourselves that one danger of the position that the ultimate ground of morality is the transcendent is the tendency for the position to slide unwittingly into the presumption of knowledge of the transcendent. There is the tendency to absolutize what might merely be our human judgments born of uncriticized prejudices and assumptions and presented as direct derivations from the transcendent principle.

As St. Thomas himself says, the ultimate foundation of morality is God, but since we cannot know God's essence except in the next life, the norm of morality is the rational nature of man insofar as it is a participation of God's essence and the Eternal Law.<sup>49</sup>

We have no insight nor direct experience of the transcendent will itself. We arrive at the notion of a transcendent will from the experience of moral obligation and from the experience of man as will oriented necessarily and absolutely to the good. We arrive at it not by virtue of a theoretical reflection in full possession of itself, but from the experience of moral obligation. We arrive at it from the stance of action, the stance of man being ahead of himself, and being claimed by that which goes beyond his full grasp and control. We arrive at it as an implication of moral obligation and as a practical postulate, as Kant would say.<sup>50</sup>

The norm of morality, therefore, is conscience or man as will fundamentally oriented to the good. Man is not removed from the stance of action. Here and now, man is necessarily oriented to the good. He is bound by an absolute obligation to act in accordance with his nature as related to the good, to other persons, and to the cosmos. He must act toward the fulfillment of being and toward the fullness of communication and reciprocity among the community of the totality of all persons.

### Study Guide Questions

1. In what way does the experience of moral obligation give rise to further questions regarding the ultimate foundation of morality?
2. How does the psycho-sociological theory show that the individual is a function and product of social factors?
3. How does the psycho-sociological theory show that conscience is really a product of the socialization process?
4. Where lies the strength of the psychological argument? What are some difficulties connected with it?
5. How does the immanentist or humanistic theory show that moral obligation springs from man himself?
6. Where is the strength of the humanistic theory? What are some difficulties connected with it?
7. How does the transcendent theory show that moral obligation manifests something more than what man or human society is?

8. Where is the strength of the transcendent theory? What are some difficulties connected with it?
9. What do you think is the ultimate foundation of morality?

### **Suggested Assignment**

Write an essay regarding what you think to be the ultimate foundation of morality. Give reasons and arguments for the position that you take.

Or else write a paper showing whether an immanentist or humanistic theory as ultimate foundation of morality could be coherently combined or not with religious faith.

Or else do a little study interviewing your classmates from other classes or your friends, asking them whether, in their view, the ultimate ground of morality and obligation is society or man or some transcendent principle.

## Chapter Thirteen

# Human Action and the Norm of Morality

NOW THAT WE HAVE SEEN the ground and norm as well as the ultimate foundation of morality, it is time to go back and take a closer look at human action in order to develop some method by which we may determine the morality of our action in a given situation.

We have seen that human action in general is the capacity or power particular to man by which he poses or adopts a goal or some envisaged future state of things. In order to realize and attain that goal, he takes up certain means. He moves himself and the world and he sets into motion a course of events which start from himself and extend out into the world.

Thus, human action has both a subjective and an objective aspect. On one hand, insofar as action originates from man and is oriented toward a goal or end intended by him, action depends completely on man for its emergence and its significance. On the other hand, insofar as action is action in and on the world, action takes on a proper structure and inertia going beyond the agent's wishes and direct control. Man as agent must therefore try to take this into account, if he truly wants to act effectively. On the basis of these two aspects of action traditional moral philosophy made the distinction between the *elicited* and the *commanded* act.<sup>51</sup> For example, a farmer who wants to raise corn must, in willing to raise corn, subject himself as it were to the proper nature and characteristics of corn. He must consider the type of soil, the climate, the moisture required, the time of year to plant. As the farmer knows in his bones, nature has its own proper life and rhythm and man in action only collaborates with it.

In the moral perspective, we have seen in the chapter on conscience that human action may be divided into several phases. First, there is man as will fundamentally oriented to the good or to his final end. This is conscience in the primary sense, expressing itself in the fundamental moral judgment: "Do good and avoid evil." Subsequently, this fundamental moral judgment translates itself into the concrete context of man's personal nature in terms of the more specific principles of the Natural Law, such as: "Respect your fellowmen." "Thou shalt not kill." "Be just." Second, there is the concrete intentional phase, where the will's fundamental orientation to the good becomes more concrete in terms of possible proximate ends and means to the ends in view of man's fundamental orientation to the final end or the good. Third is the deliberative phase. Here, the concrete possible alternative proximate ends and possible means to the ends together with their foreseeable consequences are considered and weighed against one another in the light of the concrete situation and circumstances. The fourth phase is that of consent. This signifies the act by which I take up my responsibility in the situation. In other words, I, as agent, consent to or espouse as personally mine my place in the situation. So the deliberative process, which of itself, without the will-act of consent, would be an impersonal intellectual puzzle-solving exercise searching for some optimal or critical path, leads to an existential task or personal obligation. The fifth phase is that of the practical judgment of conscience. This is conscience in the secondary sense, as we saw in chapter four. At this point, having deliberated on the various alternatives and having espoused the process of deliberation as personally my own, I am led to this or that alternative which I personally ought to adopt. The sixth phase is judgment of election or choice. In other words, having come to the personal conclusion in the previous phase as to what I ought to do (judgment of conscience), I am now faced with the decision whether to follow this judgment of conscience or not. The seventh phase is the commanded act phase. Depending upon what the preceding judgment of election is, I now set myself and my physical powers into motion to posit the decided-upon action in the external world.

We have seen that the norm of morality is, first of all, conscience. This is man as will oriented to the good, expressing itself in the judgment: "Do good and avoid evil." Second, more concretely, the norm of morality is the personal nature and dignity of man with his three structural relations to the

good, to his co-persons, and to the cosmos. Thirdly, the norm of morality is the principles of Natural Law flowing from the personal nature and dignity of man with his three structural relationships.

If we view human action in its aspects and phases in the light of the norm of morality, we see that there are four main elements or factors which are determinative of the morality of action. They are, as called by traditional moral philosophy, the intention, the nature and object of the act itself, the circumstances, and the foreseeable consequences.

### Intention

The intention of the act means the intended end or goal of the agent. Man by nature, as openness to the good, is necessarily oriented to the good which is his final end. This fundamental orientation to the final end which is the initial and continuing phase of action, is not what is meant here by intention. Rather, intention is the actual intention. It is the act of the will by which man conforms himself to this fundamental openness and orientation to the good. More concretely, the intention is the proximate goal or end decided upon by man in view of the good or the final end. In other words, having a good intention means deciding in the judgment of election (phase six) to follow one's judgment of conscience (phase five). It means choosing to do what one sees to be the good alternative, the good proximate goal and means to that goal. Having a good intention means choosing to follow one's judgment of conscience. Having a bad intention, on the other hand, means going against the judgment of one's conscience. It means choosing a goal or means that one knows to be bad and against one's fundamental orientation to the good. This makes the whole action morally bad. The expressions "being of good will" or "bad will" usually has the same meaning as having a good or bad intention.

Here, perhaps, we might consider again the erroneous conscience we saw in the chapter on conscience. An erroneous conscience or erroneous practical judgment of conscience is a wrong concluding judgment consequent upon some lack of knowledge or misinterpretation of the principles of morality. It may also come from lack of knowledge or wrong assessment of the alternatives or of the circumstances of the given situation during the deliberative phase. Provided that the misjudgment on the moral law or on the facts of the situation is due

to invincible ignorance, that is, due to lack of knowledge through no fault of his own, the man following his erroneous conscience remains of good intention. He is only doing what he perceives to be the good.

### **The Nature and Object of the Act**

The act posited in the external world may have a moral bearing of its very nature apart from the intention of the agent. As we have seen, insofar as action is action in and on the world, it has a proper structure and inertia apart from the design and direct control of the agent. On the other hand, the concrete norm of morality is the personal nature and dignity of man in his three structural relationships. There are some acts, which of their very nature are against the nature and dignity of the human person and therefore are morally bad. For example, torture or prostitution. Other acts of their very nature tend to affirm and promote the human person and are therefore morally good. For example, the care a mother gives her child. Many kinds of action, however, are of themselves morally neutral. Of their nature they are neither good nor bad. Therefore their morality depends upon the other elements of the action, like the intention of the agent or the circumstances of the action.

The importance of this aspect lies mainly in the fact that some actions, though well meant, are morally vitiated if the nature and object of the action violates the dignity of the human person and is therefore bad. This is the meaning of the often cited principle: "The end does not justify the means." In other words, a good end or goal intended by the agent does not make right an act adopted as means to the good, if the act of its very nature violates the human person. For example, the act of assassinating someone is not necessarily justified simply because the assassin judged it to be the best way of serving the people. The act of torturing a prisoner does not become morally good just because it is being done with the purpose of obtaining vital information as soon as possible.

### **Circumstances**

The circumstances are those conditions attendant to or, literally, standing around (circum-stance) the act. They are not part of the structure of the act itself, but may modify the whole

moral significance of the act in the context of the situation. Many of us have heard the story of an offender confessing before the judge that he stole a short piece of rope, without, of course, including the not so minor detail that one end of the rope was tied to the nose of a carabao. There is a whole tradition in moral philosophy which tries to put order in the innumerable possible circumstances that might affect the significance of the act. The classification proposed by Cicero has often been cited as among the more simple attempts to bring order to the welter of circumstances.<sup>52</sup> His classification is as follows: who, what where, by what means, why, how, when (*quis, quid, ubi, quibus auxiliis, cur, quomodo, quando*).

Who does the act may change the whole significance of the act. For example, the act of sexually molesting a minor is a serious violation of the dignity of the human person. But if the offender happens to be the parent of the child or the teacher of the child or one entrusted with authority over the child, the act becomes an even more serious offense.

The question of "what" applies to the material object of the act. Stealing is a violation of the right of another. But there is a difference between shoplifting a small item from a grocery store and embezzling a million pesos from a business firm.

The question of "where" usually has to do with the question of the propriety of certain acts in certain places. There is, for example, nothing wrong with a husband and wife making love. In fact it is a good act insofar as it is an expression of love and intimacy between them. But if, for example, they were to do it in a public place, the act would be wrong insofar as it could be a cause of public offense and scandal.

The question "by what means" refers to the fact that the means used in doing the act may affect the moral significance of the act. For example, the use of a dangerous weapon in the act of stealing changes the act of stealing to robbery.

The question "why" refers to the motive or intention of the agent, which as we saw above is distinct from the nature and object of the act. For example, an action which is good or at least not bad in itself, say, a man marrying a woman, becomes bad if the main motive of the man were to gain access to the wealth of the family of the woman.

The question "how" refers to the manner or the way the act is done. For example, the act of bringing up legitimate demands may be good in itself, such as children complaining against their parents. But it could be bad if done in a manner completely lacking in respect and regard for the elders.

The question "when" refers to the timing of the act, which could change the whole moral significance of an act. The act of having a restful sleep could be good in itself, but if done when one should be doing his work is a serious act of irresponsibility. An assault on a man committed under the cover of darkness makes the offense more serious in the sense that it becomes also an act of treachery.

### **Consequences**

The consequences of the act affect the moral significance of the act insofar as the consequences are foreseeable by the agent. In that case, the agent is also responsible for them, since in positing the act he should know the consequences which are bound to take place following the act. It is true that we cannot foresee all the consequences of an act. This means that we cannot be held responsible for all the consequences of our acts. It remains, however, that given the nature of an act, common knowledge tells us what the usual or normal consequences of such acts would be. In positing the act, one is also responsible for those foreseeable consequences. A man who does not know how to drive a motor vehicle but gets behind the wheel and tries to drive off for the thrill of it should be able to foresee that such an act is bound to lead to dangerous consequences, for which he is accountable.

Furthermore, a man with expert knowledge or special training knows certain consequences of actions not known by the ordinary man. They are known to him and should be known to him owing to his expert knowledge. In this case he is responsible for such consequences. For example, a doctor should know by his training the medically established probable side effects of certain medicines or drugs not normally known by the ordinary layman. In prescribing or administering such drugs, the doctor is responsible for the consequences which by his expert knowledge are foreseeable.

### **Principle of Double Effect**

One important moral problem regarding consequences of acts has to do with the type of act which has both good and bad foreseeable consequences. This occurs where there is good reason for doing the act for its good consequences, but the act

also entails foreseeably certain bad consequences. An example might be the case of a medical researcher who is doing research on something that could be vital for humanity but which exposes him to dangers that could be fatal for him. This is the case of the classical *principle of double effect*. Under this principle, cases such as these are morally allowable under certain conditions.

The act in itself must be good or at least morally neutral, otherwise, from the beginning, the whole moral act is, of course, immoral. The act of torturing a prisoner in order to get vital information might have good and bad effects, but since the act of torture of itself violates the nature and dignity of the human person, the act is immoral altogether.

Both the good and bad effects must proceed independently of each other from the act. Where the good effect comes only by way of the bad effect is a case of a morally bad means in view of a good end. The act would therefore be morally bad. An example might be a hypothetical case of a boat in danger of sinking. The pilot goes into sudden swerving maneuvers to shake some passengers overboard and thereby lighten the load of the boat. It would be a different matter where the captain of a ship hit by a torpedo pushes the button that automatically shuts off the affected part of the ship to keep the rushing waters from the rest of the water-tight compartments of the ship, even though there could be some people caught in the sealed off part. In this case, the good and bad effects proceed independently of each other from the act. It is unlike the previous example, where it is precisely the throwing overboard of people which is the cause of the lightening of the boat. In the second example, it is immaterial whether there are people or not in the shut off part. What saves the ship is the sealing off of the damaged portion. It is not the drowning of some people which is the cause of the saving of the ship.

The agent must intend only the good effect, while tolerating the bad effect. In other words, he does not really want the bad effect. He would want to avoid it if possible. However, if the agent also willfully intends or approves the bad effect, the act as a whole becomes immoral. An example might be the case of a military general who has to send a number of his men on an important but dangerous mission. The mission is vital for the success of the whole campaign. It will eventually save a lot of lives but due to the risks involved, some men on the mission will probably perish. The mission is morally legitimate, but if the general chooses to send someone simply because of a personal grudge he has against the man, the general willfully

intends or approves part of the bad effect and he thus commits an immoral act.

There must be a reasonable proportion between the good and bad effects. If the foreseeable bad effects, such as massive harm or violence to persons, outweigh any good effects that may come out of the act, it would not be moral to go ahead with it. An example might be the case of a labor leader leading his union to call a strike with a view to getting just demands of workers that have not been obtained by way of the established procedures. If under certain circumstances, the situation is such that the bad consequences for the workers themselves and for the common good resulting from the strike would far outweigh the good effects to be achieved by it, it would be an irresponsible and immoral act for the labor leader to call the strike under the circumstances.

In determining the morality of an act, each of the four aspects, intention, nature and object of the act, circumstances, foreseeable consequences, must be good or at least morally neutral. If any one of them is morally bad, the act as a whole is morally vitiated. In the concrete, these four aspects do not exist separately. There is but one whole human act in its unity. In view of the concrete circumstances, there is a guiding intention commanding the execution of an act which has a proper structure and foreseeable consequences. This is the meaning of the principle of Dionysius, the Pseudo-Areopagite, made famous by St. Thomas, that the good lies in the whole integral act, but evil comes from any singular defect.<sup>53</sup>

There is one question that arises regarding the four moral determinants of action, as they are presented here. Traditionally, in moral philosophy manuals, these three or four (foreseeable consequences can be included among the circumstances) moral determinants are presented as the main points for consideration before conscience makes its practical judgment. But here we say that the intention itself, the intended end, is already the fruit of the judgment of conscience and of the judgment of election. The reason for the way we have presented the determinants is that although there is ground for considering the goodness or badness of the nature and object of the act in itself independently of the intellect and will of the agent, it does not seem to make much sense to consider the goodness or badness of the intended end in itself, independently of the intellect and will of the agent or independently of his conscience and judgment of election.

As we have seen, man in his very being is openness to the good. He is of his very nature oriented to the final end, and

this orientation expresses itself in the fundamental judgment: "Do good and avoid evil." Subsequently it expresses itself in the more specific principles of the Natural Law. We also saw that, after a process of deliberating over the possible alternative proximate ends and means in the context of the concrete situation, these principles of morality translate themselves into the practical judgment of conscience and are eventually followed by the judgment of election or choice. In this light it seems clear that to consider the intended end with a view to determining its moral goodness or badness is inevitably to place ourselves within the purview of the judgment of conscience and the judgment of election. Since it is part of the internal or *elicited act*, as opposed to *commanded act*, the intention or intended end is good or bad, not in itself, but precisely in relation to what man perceives and wills. It is what he truly intends to do, in relation to his judgment of conscience and judgment of election.

If that be so, what then is the point of distinguishing between the intention and the nature and object of the act, since considerations of the goodness or badness of the nature and object of the act, the circumstances and the foreseeable consequences are precisely what conscience is about. They are the considerations conscience must go through before it comes to its concluding practical judgment and subsequently to the judgment of election.

First, while it is true that the nature and object of the act, the circumstances, and the foreseeable consequences must all be considered by man in conscience, and that conscience comes to a concluding judgment only upon their consideration, it also seems to be true that a distinction can be made between how these aspects of action are perceived and intended by conscience and how they might really be. For this reason there is a constant possibility of an erroneous conscience. In other words, it is possible that conscience decides to act according to what man perceives to be the good, but due to misinterpretation of the principles or misinformation regarding the facts, it comes to the wrong judgment regarding the good he ought to do.

Secondly, we must not consider conscience as merely a once and for all single act of judgment-election-execution. Rather, conscience acts in a continuing dialectic process through life.

Thus, in the first moment, man in his very being as openness to the good finds himself claimed by the final end which expresses itself in *synderesis* and the universal principles of morality. In the second moment, man in his concrete situation

reflects and comes to a practical judgment of conscience and acts accordingly in view of the good. In the third moment, man, in acting and subsequently after acting, finds himself vis-a-vis a historical reality other than himself, with its own proper structure and tendencies which go beyond his own intention and direct control. Thus, by a subsequent judgment of conscience, man might occasionally find that what he has done with all good will and intention was wrong or was inadequate. He had an erroneous conscience. Hence, this historical reality which is the proper locus of action and of the concrete good, leads man from time to time toward an ever wider openness and an ever keener or broader perception of the good. So the dialectical process continues. This is the whole point of the presentation of the three moments of conscience, the three moments of the concrete norm, the personal nature and dignity of man, and the three moments of the Natural Law in the chapters on the ground and norm of morality.

However, after granting the principle of the distinction between how man as conscience perceives and intends things to be and how the nature of things might really be and granting the constant possibility of an erroneous conscience, the imputable goodness or badness of man's acts lies finally in the way he honestly perceives and intends the good. Therein lies man's dignity as moral being and his finitude as well.

### Study Guide Questions

1. How would you define human action in general?
2. What is meant by the subjective and objective aspects of action?
3. In the moral perspective, what are the seven phases of action?
4. In applying the norm of morality—as conscience, as personal nature and dignity of man, as formulated rules of action of natural law—to the seven phases of action, show how we derive the four determinants of the morality of action.
5. What is meant by the intention of the action?
6. Show how intention is equivalent to all the phases of action till *electio*.
7. What does it mean to have a good intention? Abad Intention?
8. What is meant by the nature and object of the act itself?

9. In what sense is it distinct from the intention? In what sense can an act be said to be immoral in itself, independently of the intention?
10. What is meant by the circumstances of the action?
11. In what sense are they determinants of the morality of an act?
12. What is meant by the foreseeable consequences of the act?
13. How are they determinants of the morality of the act?
14. Why is it that if any of the four aspects of the action is bad, the whole action is bad?
15. In case of an act with both good and bad foreseeable effects, why must the act itself be good or at least be neutral?
16. What is meant by saying that the good and bad effects must flow from the act independently of each other?
17. What is meant by saying that the agent must intend only the good effects?
18. What is meant by "reasonable proportion between good and bad effects"?
19. Would you say that many of the acts that we do have both good and bad effects?
20. If, in the end, the goodness or badness of the act depends on the way the agent honestly perceives and intends the good, what is the point of distinguishing the intention of the act from the nature and object of the act itself as determinants of morality of the act?

### **Suggested Assignment**

Write an analysis of the morality or immorality of certain controversial acts such as: the police using torture on arrested persons as means of obtaining vital information, a woman going into prostitution as means of supporting her family, mining operations which pollute the environment, indiscriminate logging, and massive smuggling of dutiable goods.

## Notes

1. The term "deontology" was originally coined by Jeremy Bentham in his work, *Deontology or the Science of Morality*, published posthumously in 1834.

2. See, for example, Lawrence Kohlberg, "Education, Moral Development and Faith," in *Journal of Moral Education* 4 (1):5-16 and "Moral Stages and Moralization," in *Moral Development and Behavior*, ed. Thomas Lickona (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976), pp.34-35. See also Brenda Munsey, ed., *Moral Development, Moral Education, and Kohlberg* (Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1980).

3. Some have wondered whether perhaps by way of this myth, Plato in fact was merely trying to express metaphorically the immanent and a priori nature of human knowledge. In fact some would go as far as to say that the whole theory of forms and ideas is one big metaphor for what later in less imaginative language would be called in Kantian terms the transcendental nature of thought and language.

4. Plato's ethical doctrine is found mainly in his dialogues *Gorgias*, *Meno*, *Protagoras*, *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, *Phaedrus* and the *Republic*.

5. Aristotle's ethical doctrine is found mainly in his works *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Eudemian Ethics*, and *Politics*.

6. These notions of *synderesis* and conscience will be explained later.

7. In the chapter on the Natural Law there is a further description of Thomas Aquinas' notion of the Natural Law.

8. Thomas Aquinas did not write a moral philosophy, properly speaking. He was first and foremost a theologian. However, he did have a moral philosophy, which may be culled from his works, in particular, the *Summa Contra Gentiles* (1259-64), the

*Summa Theologiae* (1266-73); and his commentaries on the works of Aristotle (1266-72), especially the ones on *Metaphysics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*.

9. Kant's ethical doctrine may be found in the last part of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), *Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Viewpoint* (1784), "Ideas for a Philosophy of History of Humanity," a review of a work by Herder (1785), *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), *Critique of Judgment* (1790), *Toward Perpetual Peace* (1795), and a work of his old age, *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797).

10. The ethical doctrine of Jeremy Bentham may be found in his works *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789) and *Deontology* (1834, published posthumously).

11. John Stuart Mill's ethical doctrine may be found in his works *On Liberty* (1859) and *Utilitarianism* (1863, although published earlier in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1861).

12. Henry Sidgwick's ethical doctrine is found in his work *Methods of Ethics* (1874).

13. G. E. Moore's ethical doctrine is found mainly in his works *Principia Ethica* (1903) and *Ethics* (1912).

14. We may perhaps compare it somewhat to driving a car at night on a dark highway. You drive by the beam of light that goes just a little bit ahead of you, and the beam moves on, cutting through the darkness a little at a time as you drive on. This is different from day driving when you have light in all directions all at the same time, whether you move or not, and you have a grasp of the whole horizon.

15. In traditional moral philosophy, action and freedom are considered under one title—human act. For emphasis, we find ourselves constrained to separate the two, since in traditional moral philosophy, the tendency is to emphasize the voluntariness or involuntariness and the freedom of the act, and tending to downplay the aspect of action itself. In the concrete, of course, the two are really one.

16. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 60, art. 2.

17. Of course, religious obligation goes more deeply than such external commands would seem to imply. Beneath external and positive religious impositions, there is a religious obligation more profoundly grounded in man's being, arising from the inner dimension in man established by his being's openness to the Transcendent. In the case of the Christian religion, this religious dimension translates itself into the belief in a personal and transcendent source and ground of all being, and the belief that this personal and transcendent source has

manifested himself in human history, in a form most in accord with his personal nature, namely, in the form of the Divine Word. However, per se, religious obligation is a topic which goes beyond the compass of this book.

18. On the notion of *metaxu* see for example Plato's *Symposium*.

19. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 79, art. 13.

20. Ibid., I, q. 79, art. 12; I-II, q. 94, art. 2.

21. Ibid., I-II, q. 11, art. 3, ad 3m; II-II, q. 180, art. 1, ad 2m.

22. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on III De Anima*, lect. 13, Sect. 790. See also *Contra Gentiles*, II, 98 and *Compendium Theologiae*, I-II, 2, 3.

23. Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, chapter 1, opening sentence, p. 393 in the Royal Prussian Academy edition, p. 61 in the translation of H. J. Paton, "The Moral Law," (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1962).

24. As St. Thomas says, since we do not know God's essence or will, the norm of morality is the rational nature of man, or right reason. It is reason oriented to the final end, which is the reflection or impression of God's reason in man. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 19, art. 10. See also I-II, q. 91, art. 2 and q. 93, art. 5.

25. Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork*, chapter 2, section on the "Autonomy of the Will" as the supreme principle of morality, p. 440ff in the Royal Prussian Academy edition, p. 108 in the translation of H. J. Paton.

26. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 60, art. 2.

27. Here we seem to be faced with what Hegel calls a "concrete universal," or what Heidegger calls a "groundless" event. In other words, what we have is not a matter of simple deductive process where from universal principles we serenely derive particular propositions. Nor is it induction either, where we ascend from a series of individual cases to a universal principle. What we have here, it seems, is a singular event, and from this singular event itself emerges its universal significance. It is said to be groundless, because to ground means to derive from a preexisting ground or principle, whereas what we have seems to be something underived. It is something emergent, new, and in this sense historical.

28. At times, the judgment-event, after all efforts to attain openness, or purity of heart and to unfetter ourself from our personal and social prejudices and blind spots, may very well be discerned as not substantiated by the moral principles. In any case, the self-critical and generous way of having faced the crisis shall have done its work by expanding our vision and

opening up ourself more and more to the good. Yet, it could also signify that, while we are not exactly closed to the good, we are still not quite ready at this point in our life to be generous enough to be up to the good to be done presenting itself before us.

29. As Plato says in *Phaedo*, "He who is not pure does not understand what is pure." And Aristotle says, "But the Supreme Good only appears good to the good man: vice perverts the mind and causes it to hold false views about the first principles of conduct." *Nicomachean Ethics*, VI, xii, 10.

30. This point must be stressed if we are to avoid the two extremes of lumping the community of persons into one impersonal collective whole, or on the other hand, fracturing the community into an atomistic collection of individual interests.

31. The point could well be raised whether this final end of fullness of personal existence is at all possible. St. Thomas, for example, holds that the final end of man is possible only in *beatific vision* in the life hereafter. See for example Thomas Aquinas, *Contra Gentiles*, III, chap. 38-63. We shall have to deal with this question in a later chapter. Whatever be its possibility, this final end is a moral exigency, nay, the moral exigency and obligation. Here and now, I must do good and avoid evil. To do good is, in the concrete, to respect and to affirm the embodied human person, to act toward the greater and greater realization of the personal nature and dignity of man and toward the horizon of maximum communication and reciprocity among the totality of persons.

32. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970, 2nd ed.).

33. Helmut Thielicke, *Theologische Ethik*, Tübingen, 1951; Jacques Ellul, *Le fondement théologique du droit*, Neuchâtel, 1946.

34. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 90, art. 4, Resp.

35. Ibid., I-II, q. 91, art. 1, Resp.

36. Ibid., I-II, q. 19, art. 10, ad primum.

37. Ibid., I-II, q. 94, art. 2, Resp.

38. Ibid., I-II, q. 91, art. 2, Resp.

39. Ibid., I-II, q. 94, art. 6, Resp.

40. Ibid., I-II, q. 94, art. 4 and 5.

41. Ibid., II-II, q. 47, art. 8, Resp.

42. Ibid., II-II, q. 51, art. 3 and 4.

43. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Nicomachean Ethics*, II, lect. 2.

44. Francisco Suarez' political and legal philosophy may be found in his treatises *De Legibus* and *De Bello et de Indis*.

45. St. Thomas does distinguish between the moral good and the rational or natural good, but he holds that one flows from the other. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 17, art. 1. In God reason and will are one, but in finite man the experience of moral obligation seems to indicate an absolute imperative that is not quite reducible to the rational exigency of man's reason for the good or his final end. It should be noted, on the other hand, that Thomas does maintain that man is destined to a final end which is supernatural and not merely natural. See for example *Contra Gentiles*, III, chap. 26-63.

46. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 2, art. 3. See also *Contra Gentiles*, III, chap. 38-63.

47. *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 29, art. 3, Resp.

48. St. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, IV, 20, 7.

49. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 19, art. 10. See also I-II, q. 19, art. 4, Resp. and I-II, q. 91, art. 2.

50. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, Part I, Book II, Chapter II, V-VII; pp. 128-147 in the translation of Lewis White Beck (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1956); vol. 5, pp. 125-42, Prussian Academy edition.

51. See again the part under "Freedom" in chapter nine on the description of moral experience for the distinction between *elicited* and *commanded* acts. See also Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, I, art. 1, ad 2m.

52. Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Inventione Rhetorica*, I, 24.

53. "Bonum causatur ex integra causa, malum autem ex singularibus defectibus." Thomas Aquinas, quoting Dionysius, the Pseudo-Areopagite, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 19, art. 6, ad primum.

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